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**DEVELOPING DEMOCRATIC CIVIC VIRTUES THROUGH
AESTHETIC EDUCATION AND DESIGN
IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

by

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Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Austin
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

**The University of Texas at Austin
August 2014**

Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge the help, support, and inspiration of the following people. Without them, successfully writing and finishing this dissertation would have been extremely difficult

Thank you:

Benjamin Gregg, my advisor and chair of my committee, for continued support and for always knowing the right thing to say to motivate me while at the same time helping me to improve my work.

Kathryn and Michael Carruthers, my parents, for sending me to a Waldorf School, which allowed me to gain the experience and perspective that inspired this work.

My Entire Family, for always believing in me, supporting my dreams, goals, and work, and for celebrating my success.

Stephen Orsinger, my husband, for taking extra care of the children and our lives, making it possible for me to dedicate the last few months to the completion of this project.

Odysseus, Ariadne, and Sophrosyne Orsinger, my children, for endlessly inspiring me, bringing me joy, and understanding when mommy had to go work, again!

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

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By consciously re-crafting K-12 American public schools through aesthetic design, the United States can improve civic education. Specifically, by paying attention to how school environments affect students through each of their five senses, Americans can create learning environments that encourage the development of civic virtues necessary to support four essential criteria identified by John Dewey as foundational for an ideal democracy: individual expression, communicated experience, associated living, and consciousness of the connection between individuals, their behaviors, and their choices. By examining Dewey's theory of ideal democracy, and the civic virtues that it requires, I delineate and analyze specific criteria by which to improve American civic education in public schools. Then I show that creating beautiful schools can meet the specified criteria and develop civic virtues in students. These virtues are necessary – although not by themselves sufficient – for healthy democratic citizenship.

America today is far from an ideal democracy. Split in our beliefs, unengaged in the civic process, disconnected from fellow citizens, and often unaware of the harm caused by our lack of participation, care, and responsibility, we have a long way to go before our democracy approaches the ideal form proposed by Dewey. Far from deterring our efforts, however, these facts should motivate us to find new and improved ways to educate our young citizens during their years in public schooling. This thesis aims to convince the reader that the conscious crafting of school aesthetics can provide a unique and irreplaceable contribution to that end.

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Introduction

The thesis of this dissertation is that by consciously crafting beautiful and artistic aesthetics of K-12 American public schools, and by involving students in the creation and maintenance of these beautiful school environments, civic education can be improved. Specifically, I argue that the aesthetics of school environments have a unique role to play in the development of democratic civic virtues – characteristics, traits, or dispositions of citizens – essential for the health and depth of our democracy.

I argue that schools do more than provide a physical space in which to educate our children. I explain that schools send a message, represent values, inspire strong feelings, and encourage some behaviors while disuading others. The theoretical and empirical evidence presented in what follows shows why it is reasonable to believe that the physical buildings and grounds of the schools within our communities provide an immediate, visceral, wide-spread, public presentation of what education means and of what we¹ expect from our children, and that they begin educating the citizens of our country long before they ever set foot within them.

It will become clear why every American citizen should be looking at our country's schools and asking: What do these schools say? Specifically, what do they say about education, individual development, community, and democracy? And what feelings

¹ The American people are greatly divided along many dimensions, including public education, however, our disagreements do not make it any less the case that each school sends a message to students and represents certain values and expectations. Rather than having these messages be haphazardly sent or representative of only a minority of the public, I argue that each community should collaborate and cooperate in order to consciously define and create the messages sent by its schools.

and behaviors do they inspire? The four images below, of schools in Michigan, provide a classic example of many schools in our country.



Photographs 1 – 4²: Examples of common school exteriors built with few materials, monotone in color, little landscaping, and no representation of the culture, ecology, or history of the school’s community.

Throughout the dissertation it will become clear that perfectly adequate school buildings, such as these – not to mention the thousands of schools with significant maintenance and structural problems³ – are likely to do little to welcome, inspire, awake, or excite students. I show that their drab, uniform, unexpressive facades – created with few building materials, monotone colors, little landscaping, and nothing representing the

² All photographs numbered left to right, top to bottom.

³ “Based on survey responses, 53 percent of public schools needed to spend money on repairs, renovations, and modernizations to put the school’s onsite buildings in good overall condition (table 5)” (Alexander and Lewis, 2014, p. 3).

cultural, ecological, or historical aesthetic of their community – speak of conformity; lack creativity and expression; and provide little to develop traits of loyalty, respect, or care – all of which I show to be essential dispositions for democratic citizens.

By appealing to theoretical arguments, empirical research, and each reader’s aesthetic judgment I aim to make a convincing argument that schools, that look more like the following images and less like the ones above, are likely to send a different message, evoke different feelings, inspire different behaviors, and aid in the development of different characteristics: those which are beneficial and essential for democracy.



Photographs 5-8: Examples of schools that create a unique sense of place, inspire interest, engagement, and integrity, and awaken awareness through the use of creative design, unique imagery, color, artistry, pleasing aesthetics, and natural landscapes.



Photographs 9: Another example of a school that creates a unique sense of place, inspires interest, engagement, and integrity, and awakens awareness through the use of creative design, unique imagery, color, artistry, and pleasing aesthetics.

While the first four images show dark, cold, uninspired school facades, these five images each show school exteriors that are expressive and interesting – using creative design, unique imagery, color, artistry, pleasing aesthetics, and natural landscapes to create a unique sense of place; inspire interest, engagement, and integrity; and awaken awareness. This dissertation aims to show why designing our schools to look more like these, than the first four schools, can benefit our democracy.

The basic logic and steps of my argument are the following: The United States is a democracy, and it is beset by many political and social problems: lack of civic engagement, social and economic inequality, declining social capital, partisan conflict, and congressional stagnation, to name but a few. In order to gain insight into how we might improve our democracy, I turn to John Dewey and his theory of ideal democracy. By appealing to an explication of the essential elements of an ideal democracy, I discern a number of criteria for improving American democracy through improved civic

education. I turn to Dewey for the theoretical model from which to ascertain these improvements, because Dewey focuses on the relationship between democracy and democratic citizens. Since Dewey's focus is largely on the necessary activities and dispositions of democratic citizens, his work is the perfect place to look for suggestions for improving civic education in public schools.

Civic education contains three main facets: civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic virtue. As I discuss in Chapter 3, the development of civic virtues is addressed least in literature concerning the improvement of civic education. This is the portion of civic education to which I apply Dewey's theory, in an attempt at improvement. With an understanding of characteristics of successful civic education – including examples of essential democratic civic virtues – I then explain how the aesthetics of school environments can contribute to the improvement of civic education through the development of democratic civic virtues. While such an improvement will not be sufficient for addressing the current problems with American democracy, the improved development of democratic civic virtues in citizens is an essential piece, without which the chances of any real improvement are limited.

By creating school environments, and engaging students in activities, that do not, like so many schools today, actively develop character traits and habits of behavior contrary to those necessary for democratic citizenship – such as passivity, disconnection, and intolerance – but instead encourage the development, practice, and strengthening of dispositions or virtues necessary for democratic citizenship – such as engagement,

connection, and tolerance – schools can play an important role in improving civic education. By transforming environments that induce stress and encourage anti-social and aggressive behaviors, such as bullying, into environments that support child-development and expression, as well as facilitating communication, care, and respect, American public schools can create successful civic education programs that produce a strong foundation on which successful democratic citizenship can be built.

In what follows, I endeavor to inspire the reader so that he or she can begin to see how America’s schools can become burgeoning seedbeds of democratic civic virtue. I intend to arouse excitement for, and belief and engagement in, the creation of vibrant, independent school communities where our children can develop the dispositions necessary to be engaged, communicative, creative, and conscientious participants in our democracy. I aim to show how transforming visually uninteresting and unimaginative school aesthetics – lacking expression and aiming at utilitarian student movement instead of community-building and student development – such as these:



Photograph 10: Uninteresting and unimaginative school aesthetics, lacking expression and aiming at utilitarian student movement instead of community-building and student development.

into unique, engaging, light-filled, colorful, multi-sensory aesthetics such as these⁴:

⁴ This photograph shows an installation at the Miami Airport entitled Harmonic Convergence. Constructed within a pedestrian walk way, this is a light and sound instillation. “The work combines light, colour, and sound...speakers installed at regular intervals along the walkway create a continuously changing ‘sonic portrait’ of south Florida as they play the sounds of tropical birds, thunderstorms, and other environments native to the region. Video sensors at either end of the passageway track visitor movement, causing changes in the density and composition of the sound piece relative to the number of passengers in the space.” (For citation see Photograph 11.)



Photograph 11: Example of characteristics school aesthetics could contain to improve student development and community-building: natural light, color, outdoor views, engaging design, multi-sensory experience, and over-all beautiful and appealing aesthetics.

can contribute to the development of the core civic virtues necessary for America's continued success. I attempt to achieve my goal of showing that it is reasonable to believe that the intentional creation and maintenance of school aesthetics – and engagement of students in this process – can be a uniquely powerful and successful way to develop these essential democratic civic virtues, thereby improving civic education, by presenting empirical studies indicating that specific aspects of school environments – such as natural lighting, quiet acoustics, wooden furniture, the smell of baking bread, and a rhythmic schedule – have been shown to develop characteristics and habitual behaviors in children that are the same as the civic virtues previously identified as the foundations of democratic citizenship.

A secondary conclusion that can be drawn from my research, presentation, and arguments is that there is a wide array of diverse literature and areas of research that have important contributions to make to the improvement of civic education within our schools. These various literatures and research results commonly have little cross-influence on each other, tending to remain insular and narrowly focused. However, many of these fields address overlapping concepts and would benefit by looking at the perspectives and information other areas of study have to contribute. One contribution of this dissertation is to show the benefits of cross-disciplinary study, especially when dealing with issues as complex as the development of human behavior. In what follows, I collect relevant information found in separate fields of study and combine it in such a way that a unique and beneficial contribution can be made to the question of how schools can cultivate the civic virtues essential for a healthy, sustainable democracy.

The fields of study and research I draw from are the following: Democratic theory, character education, civic education (and related fields), school design, environmental psychology, philosophy of art, philosophy of beauty, philosophy of aesthetics, art education, and research on habituation, stress, and behavior. I also utilize examples of programs that are successfully employing environmental aesthetics toward student development – whether or not they recognize the democratic significance of their work. The research and theories I use from each field to make my arguments and draw my conclusions are not new. Each individual point has been previously researched and developed: Much has been written on the nature of democracy, and the importance of

civic virtues for its maintenance; it is widely agreed that our civic education programs need to be improved; there is a large body of research on the effects of environments on human behavior, as well as on the important effects of school environments on student behavior and learning; from Aristotle to cognitive scientists today, the role of repeated behavior in creating habits that effect future behaviors has been widely explored; and there are many current programs that successfully utilize the aesthetics of environments to improve student behavior and enhance their development. What my dissertation contributes is an explanation of the ways in which these separate areas of theory, research, and practice fit together. I tie together research that has been done on human behavior, habit-forming, and the effects of environmental aesthetics in order to demonstrate how this information can provide guidance for the improvement of civic education and the development of democratic civic virtues within our schools.

The perspective I am arguing for – that the aesthetics of one’s environment contribute importantly and significantly to one’s current and future behavior and development – is not widely held within our country. Nor is it a significant part of the Western philosophic tradition to discuss the aesthetics of educational environments nor to link them to beneficial outcomes in education. I recognize that many readers will likely be skeptical that beautifying schools can contribute to the improvement of civic education. However, I hope to at least persuade my readers of the importance of considering the effects school environments can have on students’ behavior (both current and future) and the effects this behavior can have on the health of our democracy, as well

as clearly articulating the reasonableness of believing a correlation can exist between school aesthetics and the development of civic virtue. I attempt this persuasion and articulation in the following way:

In order to provide guidance for the improvement of civic education in American public schools, Chapter 1 defines and explains Dewey's theory of ideal democracy. By gaining a clear conception of the essential characteristics of an ideal democracy we can determine guidelines by which to improve American democracy today. This chapter explains the general aspects of a pragmatic view of democracy, such as the one espoused by Dewey; it also explains his view of democracy as a transformative ideal that's ultimate goal is the free, autonomous self-development of its citizens, resting on individual expression, communicated experience, associated living, and consciousness of the connection between citizens and their choices; finally, in this chapter I discuss the creative dynamic, a balanced tension that must exist between individual and communal impulses – within individuals and the community as a whole – in Dewey's understanding of ideal democracy.

Taking away, from the first chapter, characteristics by which civic education programs can be improved, in the second chapter I discuss and define democratic civic virtues. Dewey's theory of ideal democracy emphasizes the importance of individual development, but he is not the only one who views the development of civic virtues in citizens as an essential foundation of democracy. In this chapter I explain the importance of democratic civic virtues for democracy and discuss why they are more important than

institutional structures. Then I provide forty examples of democratic civic virtues that support the four essential criteria for democracy in Dewey's theory, explaining that while civic virtues are context sensitive their determination is not relativistic. Finally, I discuss research indicating that the successful development of democratic civic virtues requires practice and habituation.

In Chapter 3, I confirm that civic education, or education necessary to prepare students to be responsible citizens, has always been, and is likely to continue to be, seen as a top priority for American public schools. I give an account of past historical approaches to citizenship education, during which it becomes apparent that the same tension discussed in Chapter 1 – between individual and communal dispositions – has played a role in determining methods of citizenship education throughout our country's history. This discussion makes it clear that the theoretical dichotomies discussed in the previous two chapters have real implications for citizenship education in practice. In this chapter, I also locate my thesis within the relevant research, explaining the different theoretical and educational strands of thought that have contributed to the citizenship education of American citizens, and explaining that my thesis contributes to the portion of citizenship education that overlaps with character education. Lastly, the end of this chapter gives an account of general methods currently considered important for successful civic education, providing further guidelines for the improvement of civic education programs in American public schools.

Chapter 4, then, demonstrates how and why the improvement of civic education through increased development of democratic civic virtues is relevant to, applicable to, and extremely important for, American schools today. This section contains empirical evidence that democratic civic virtues are in fact important to the health of our democracy and that they are currently declining at a dangerous rate. Next, this chapter provides evidence that schools can play an important role in developing democratic civic virtue and explains the problems and deficits with current civic education programs. The third part of this chapter provides theoretical evidence that the aesthetics of school environments are important for the development of democratic civic virtues and that they are not currently given enough consideration or attention. This chapter explains why my thesis is relevant for today's public schools and introduces the suggestion that art and aesthetics can play an important role in the improvement of civic education programs.

Working from the suggestion that the aesthetics of environments can play a role in determining and developing behaviors and virtues, Chapter 5 defines what I mean by school aesthetics, art, and beauty and discusses the history of art education in American schools. I explain that my proposal for integrating art and aesthetics in public schools, for the purpose of improved civic education and the development of democratic citizenship, was historically the original purpose for including art education in public school curriculums. I also discuss a current initiative of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities called the Turnaround Arts initiative, which advocates the use of art for regenerating and improving American schools. I discuss the similarities of this

program to the suggestions I make in this dissertation. I also discuss the important differences between the two and suggest that improved civic education be an additional explicit goal of the program.

Chapter 6 provides an introduction to, and summary of, the rest of the chapters in the dissertation, which contain empirical research, philosophic arguments, and specific examples of how the aesthetics of school environments, and student participation in their creation and maintenance, can contribute to the improvement of civic education through the development of democratic civic virtues and by satisfying the characteristics identified as important for successful civic education programs throughout the previous chapters. After this summary, I briefly discuss the philosophies of Waldorf schools, Montessori schools, and Reggio Emilia schools, on the creation of their school environments, because they each provide an example of how schools can recognize and utilize the conscious crafting of their school environments to support and improve pedagogical goals. I also discuss the ways these schools and their approaches differ from my thesis. This chapter also includes a discussion of general objections to my thesis, and finally, the last section explains why the suggestions made in the remaining chapters are meant to be suggestions and not ridged prescriptions for school design.

The following four chapters provide empirical support for my thesis and practical suggestions for its implementation: Chapter 7 discusses the benefits of beautiful visual aesthetics inside schools, Chapter 8 discusses the contributions made by visual aesthetics outside schools, Chapter 9 discusses the remaining school aesthetics and their effects on

student hearing, touch, taste, smell, and sense of rhythm, and Chapter 10 discusses the benefits to civic education of increasing nature on school grounds and in classrooms. In addition to the theoretical and empirical arguments provided in these chapters, I hope to persuade my readers of the benefit of my thesis by exposing them to a plethora of visual examples. When I began writing this dissertation, I was attempting something difficult: I was trying to persuade my readers without using photographs. Essentially, I was trying to convey the importance of aesthetic experience, and the effects it can have, without providing any aesthetic experience itself. Adding photographs enhances my message because readers can literally see what I am saying. Likewise, my message would be that much more evident, and that much stronger, if I could take the readers on a walking tour through each school. If the readers could actually breathe the air and feel the full impact of the combined aesthetic experiences within these schools – all senses engaged at once – the readers could literally *sense* the strength of my thesis, in addition to being rationally persuaded by the evidence and arguments. For, “we sense a place with our whole being” (Pinciotti, 2013, p. 4)

While this dissertation may be helpful for sparking initial interest and perhaps beginning a transformation in perspective, it can only be a beginning. What is additionally necessary is for students, teachers, parents, community members, governmental representatives – ideally all American citizens – to go into schools and to allow themselves to fully see, feel, smell, and hear the messages they are sending and the habits they are inducing. We must all begin to ask ourselves and each other: What do we

want our school environments to teach our children about citizenship and the freedoms and responsibilities of democracy? What behaviors and eventual habits do we want the aesthetics of our schools to develop within our citizens? And how can we inspire expression, communication, associated living, and consciousness of connection through the designs of our schools? Toward this end, I include suggestions for further empirical research to strengthen and extend our understanding of the relationship between beautiful school aesthetics and the development of specific democratic civic virtues.

Chapter 1: Democracy

“Democracy is appropriate to all modes of human association, the family, the school, industry, religion, or any other site of extensive and enduring mutually affecting interactions among people”

– Dewey (1927)

The United States is a democratic country. But what exactly does it mean for a country to be a democracy? This question is important because it affects how we live in society, how we structure our lives, how we educate our children, and how we strive to be good citizens. Our ultimate goals, and the defining features of our country, affect many of the decisions we make. We cannot decide how best to run a country or how to live the best individual life without understanding what type of political community we are trying to be. Societal norms, the structure of individual lives, education, and civic virtue all look different in a communist country, a country run by a dictator, and a democracy.

Trying to understand what it means to live in a democracy is not a heady, academic question unrelated to the average person’s everyday life. Rather, it is an essential question that must be answered in order to make everyday decisions and judgments about what is necessary to support and achieve the kind of lives we want to live, and the characteristics citizens should cultivate in order to maintain the health and vitality of our country. Most importantly to the thesis of this dissertation, understanding what it means to live in a democracy is necessary for improving America’s civic education. For, as Dewey said, “[t]he conception of education as a social process and function has no definite meaning until we define the kind of society we have in mind”

(Dewey, 1916, 7.5.7). In order to talk about improving civic education, and in order to improve the health of our democracy through this education, we must first start with a specific and clear understanding of what democracy ideally should be, in order to gain an understanding of what is required for its healthy maintenance and sustainability.

My method of approaching the question of how we should improve our country's civic education is to examine John Dewey's theory of ideal democracy and its essential characteristics. In this chapter, I will be answering the question of what an ideal democracy is – or what democracies should strive to be – rather than addressing the question of what precisely the current characteristics of our American democracy are. It will become clear throughout the discussion in this chapter that the current democracy in America is far from embodying the characteristics of Dewey's ideal democracy. However, this disparity does not make Dewey's ideal – or the criteria for improving civic education I derive from it – irrelevant. Rather, this disparity makes a clear understanding of Dewey's ideal all the more important, so that we have something by which to guide our efforts at improving the current state of American Democracy.

This chapter contains three parts. The first part – Democratic Theory – explains the dissertation's theoretical starting point: the general aspects of a pragmatic view of democracy, based on the work of John Dewey. This section also identifies some general guidelines for successful civic education programs based on this pragmatic view of democracy. The second part – Dewey's Democratic Self-Development – explains Dewey's understanding of democracy as a transformative ideal the ultimate goal of which

is the free, autonomous self-development of its citizens. This section also specifies essential characteristics which must be developed and practiced in order for citizens to gain autonomy and freedom. The third and final part of this chapter – The Creative Dynamic: A Balanced Tension – elucidates a tension between individual and communal impulses that has been described as existing both within individuals and within democratic societies as a whole. In contrast to this dichotomy being a destructive tension, this section contains an explanation of Dewey’s work (as well as the literature on Deep Democracy) which suggests that creating a balance between these two impulses – within citizens and within society as a whole – is the only way to create truly free and autonomous citizens, as well as the only way to uphold a fully free democracy.

DEMOCRATIC THEORY: A PRAGMATIC VIEW BASED ON THE WORK OF JOHN DEWEY

As soon as you ask, “What are the essential elements of an ideal democracy?” there are a host of different answers, many of which disagree with each other⁵. Part of the reason for this disagreement is differing reasons for asking the question. “There are different methodologies for approaching democratic theory: normative questions about the value of democracy; descriptive questions concerning the way societies called democratic actually function or might realistically be anticipated to function; and semantic questions about the meaning of ‘democracy’” (Cunningham, 2002, pp. 10-11). In this dissertation, I am asking the question in order to improve civic education in K-12

⁵ Naess, Christophersen, & Kvalo, 1956; Parker, 1996; Cook & Westheimer, 2006.

American public schools. The understanding of an ideal democracy I use for my starting point, one of a multitude of different options, is a definition consistent with a pragmatic view of democracy, which rests heavily on the philosophic work of Dewey and coincides with much of the work done on Deep Democracy.

A pragmatic orientation toward democracy, as described by Fran Cunningham, “is not anchored in a single concept of democracy. This is because its core concept is not ‘democracy’ but more (or less) democratic” (2002, p. 146). This distinction between identifying and defining a democratic way of being, as opposed to a democracy per se, begins to make sense when combined with Dewey’s assertion that democracy is of unlimited scope and not limited simply to a particular structure of government: “Democracy is appropriate to all modes of human association, the family, the school, industry, religion,’ or any other site of extensive and enduring mutually affecting interactions among people” (Dewey, 1927). In other words, Dewey understands democracy as “a way of life” and more than simply a form of government. Another way to phrase this assertion is to say that democracy is *a way of living*. Following Dewey’s definition, I take democracy to be a verb, not a noun, referring to what citizens do and how they behave and interact⁶ (in distinction to a rigid form or structure of government).

⁶ Since there are many different views of democracy, if you greatly disagree with a pragmatic view of democracy you may also disagree with my assessment of what is necessary for democracy’s health and maintenance. However, it is my hope that, even with a differing view of democracy, a reader may find enough evidence of the benefits of beautiful school aesthetics to agree that implementing such environmental affects would be beneficial to America, its schools, and the education of its citizens, nonetheless.

This understanding of Dewey's, which I follow throughout the dissertation – that democracy is an activity, and that this activity should ideally be created and maintained through the continuous participation of each citizen – implies that the ideal of democracy is not simply a governmental structure external to the people, nor is it an activity that can be carried out mostly by elected officials, with only the occasional participation of the citizens through voting. As Dewey points out, this view has not always been common:

[F]or a long period we [have] acted as if our democracy were something that perpetuated itself automatically; as if our ancestors had succeeded in setting up a machine that solved the problem of perpetual motion in politics. We acted as if democracy were something that took place mainly at Washington and Albany--or some other state capital--under the impetus of what happened when men and women went to the polls once a year or so. (Dewey, 1976, p. 225)

Democracy, as Dewey suggests, is rather a way of life, to be carried out every day in the way ordinary citizens live their lives and interact with each other. As I show in what follows, this understanding has significant consequences for civic education and what it should be striving to achieve. Based on this understanding of democracy, an important part of civic education will have to involve the development of citizens and their behavior.

A second aspect of a pragmatic orientation toward democracy is the belief that democracy is context sensitive (Cunningham, 2002, p. 143). This means that what a democracy looks like at any given point and in any given community will vary, sometimes greatly. An appropriate democratic solution, institution, policy, or practice – among other things – in any given situation will depend on the specific social, economic, cultural, and additional details of the circumstance and community. Within a range of

general parameters, democracies, their structures, institutions, and policies, can (and often should and will) vary greatly.⁷ When thinking about the improvement of civic education within America, this point suggests that while there should be general goals and methods shared among all civic education programs, this conception of civic education should be flexible enough to allow the specifics of each program to be determined by the particular needs, values, and inspirations at each school.

A third aspect of a pragmatic understanding of democracy is that democracy is problematic (Cunningham, 2002, p. 146). Dewey believes that, like all human endeavors, democracy should ideally be a problem-solving process. Cunningham explains,

An ideally democratic situation would be one where through their common actions people directly or indirectly bring aspects of their social environment into accord with their uncoerced wishes (whether those they bring with them to collective projects or those generated in the process of interaction) or where they negotiate a mutually acceptable compromise. An ideal democracy on one of these alternatives would still not be problem free. (2002, p. 146)

Dewey believes this collaborative process involving individual contributions should ideally characterize the process of democracy, which will be a continual effort at solving one problem after another. As Green suggests,

As we come to realize the existential and practical implications of the democratic ideal, we become aware of the need for a deeper social realization of democracy than the world has yet seen...Dewey rightly suggests that, instead of being a *justificatory ideal* for existing institutions, democracy is a *transformative ideal* that leads us to work for their further evolution. (Green, 1999, p. x)

Green echoes Cunningham's interpretation, namely, that citizens within a democracy should be striving to transform their world by negotiating mutually acceptable

⁷ For further discussion of this point see Macpherson, 1965; Cunningham, 1994; and Savage, 2002, p. 156.

compromises that solve problems and contribute to the improvement of the community and the lives and development of individuals. They also both recognize that this process will be on-going and no matter how successfully it is carried out, it will not prevent future problems from arising nor future compromises from needing to be reached.

This aspect of democracy suggests that a successful civic education program should not be static and set in place for lengthy periods of time, but should also be continually evolving and transforming based on creating ever better solutions to problems that emerge within the program, school, or community. Likewise, this aspect of a pragmatic view of democracy suggests that the skills involved in the individual participation and collective cooperation necessary to engage in such a communal problem-solving process should also be developed within the civic education programs of our schools.

The final aspect, I discuss, of a pragmatic orientation to democracy is that democracy is a matter of degree (Cunningham, 2002, p. 144):

To say that democracy is a social idea is not to say that it is often or even ever attained in full (Dewey, 148-9), and Dewey allows that sometimes publics engage in socially harmful activities (15). This means that one can value democracy while recognizing that it might sometimes be in conflict with other values and that it might never be perfectly realized. Democracy on this view is an ideal in the sense of being a model by reference to which alternative (imperfect) democracy-enhancing practices and institutions might be identified. The essential methodological point here is that rather than regarding democracy as a quality that a social site either has or lacks, one should focus on 'publics' to ask how democratic (or undemocratic) they are, how democratic they might (or ought to) be, and how democracy within them can be enhanced. (Cunningham, 2002, p. 144)

Throughout the dissertation, this is an important point to keep in mind: real democracies meet the criteria identified as essential to an ideal conception of democracy to greater and lesser extents. Laying out the essential, defining elements of democracy, as Dewey does, allows real political communities to have an ideal by which they can define their striving. Without an ideal vision of democracy, it is harder to notice when a political community has policies and practices that do not further its democratic ends.

Speaking of Dewey's democratic ideal, Savage says, "Ideals are instrumental in that they provide standards of better or worse and thus directions for growth....What is needed is an ideal that is precise enough to provide direction but broad enough to allow for a plurality of cultural variations" (Savage, 2002, p. 97). The same is true for America's civic education programs. They should have ideals for which they strive – based on those of democracy – that can offer standards of better and worse and directions for growth and change, but these standards should be broad enough to allow for plurality, cultural variations, and different educational needs within different communities. Likewise, civic education programs should continually strive for growth and improvement, rather than believing that an optimal solution can be found and achieved. For,

The process of growth, of improvement and progress, rather than the static outcome and result, becomes the significant thing...The end is no longer a terminus or limit to be reached. It is the active process of transforming the existent situation. Not perfection as a final goal, but the ever-enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining is the aim of living." (Macedo, 1990, p. 280)

And so should it be the aim of democracy and our civic education. Likewise, Savage reminds us:

That such a state is unrealizable no more disqualifies it from being the final end of culture than the unattainability of perfect health, perfect virtue, or perfect wisdom makes the quests for a healthy body, a virtuous self, or a wise mind a waste of time and effort. It is the quest itself that is regarding in each case. For it is not a matter of perfect wisdom or no wisdom, but rather degrees of wisdom that are attained by working toward the ideal. (Savage, 2002, p. 174)

Hence, as we seek to improve civic education within our schools we should cherish ideals as inspirations that push us and our programs to continually improve and evolve to better serve the citizens of our democracy.

Throughout this dissertation I establish my thesis, arguments, and conclusion on this pragmatic orientation towards democracy, pulling heavily from the philosophy of Dewey. Already we can see that identifying what we mean by democracy provides general beginning guidelines for how to create successful civic education programs within our schools. This section has indicated that the following four characteristics should be considered when creating or evaluating civic education within our country:

- Civic education should focus on developing behaviors and traits that affect citizens' "ways of life" such that they embody a democratic way of being⁸.
- General goals and methods for civic education should be provided but these should be flexible enough that the specifics of each school's needs, values, and inspirations can determine the details of their programs.

⁸ In the next section, this democratic way of being will be shown to include: individual expression, communicated experience, associated living, and consciousness of the connection between individuals, their behaviors, and their choices.

- All civic education programs should be continually evolving and transforming to solve emerging problems – they should not be static programs that stay the same for lengthy periods of time, unaffected by new problems or ideas. These programs should also aid students in developing the skills of participation and cooperation, in order that they can be involved in the problem-solving process of democracy.
- Ideals for our civic education programs should be cherished as leading to ever greater improvement. Although perfection should not be the goal, we should not shy away from high objectives and standards.

Although it is probably still unclear at this point, in Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10 it will become clear that approaching civic education through creating and maintaining artistic and beautiful school aesthetics achieves these general guidelines, as well as achieving many other important aspects of successful civic education programs explained in the intermediate sections and chapters.

DEWEY’S DEMOCRATIC SELF-DEVELOPMENT

If we are going to gain an adequate understanding of an ideal democracy, as Dewey understood it, then we must spend time examining his assertion that the ultimate end of democracy is the individual development of its citizens. According to Dewey, democracy has a cyclical relationship with individual self-development: democracy both relies upon it and strives to achieve it as its final end. Every aspect of a democracy should

strive to improve the self-development of citizens and thus can be judged based on how well it achieves this goal.

Government, business, art, religion, all social institutions have a meaning, a purpose. The purpose is to set free and to develop the capacities of human individuals without respect to race, sex, class or economic status. And all this is one with saying that the test of their value is the extent to which they educate every individual into the full stature of his possibility. Democracy has many meanings, but if it has a moral meaning, it is found in resolving that the supreme test of all political institutions and industrial arrangements shall be the contribution they make to the all-around growth of every member of society. (Dewey, *Middle Works* 12, p. 186)

In a way unlike any other form of government, the ideal of democracy is fundamentally tied to the individual development of its citizens. An ideal democracy requires faith in the abilities of men to change, grow, and develop in such a way that they can work together to guide their community. Instead of placing responsibility for successful government and the health of the community on external decrees or hierarchical order, democracy, in the ideal, places this responsibility on its citizenry. An ideal democratic community will succeed or fail depending in large part upon the characters, decisions, and actions of the citizens that comprise it. Ideologically, in order to support and pursue an ideal democracy, faith and trust must be placed in humanity, in the ability and desire of individuals both to be free and to come together in such a way that they can build and sustain a successful community. “Dewey is asking us to reflect critically on ourselves, our culture, and our political institutions and to judge them in

terms of the ultimate end of individuals and community alike: individual self-development” (Savage, 2002, p. 120)⁹.

The individual self-development Dewey is talking about involves personal liberty and autonomy. His conception of liberty and autonomy is complex in that it requires more than negative freedoms from external coercive and preventative forces. “[W]hile negative freedom and external goods are necessary, they are not a sufficient means to the liberal conception of the good – they do not provide the internal liberty to make intelligent and moral life choices” (Savage, 2002, p. 137). Dewey’s conception relies on a type of internal freedom that most closely resembles a classical philosophic conception of freedom, which involves caring for the soul and liberating it from internal constraints:

Habituation into the moral and intellectual virtues is necessary for liberty from internal constraints. Autonomy is merely an empty and formal concept unless it includes the internal capacities to overcome moral and intellectual limitations...Self-creation, as Dewey conceives of it, is not a flippant and superficial activity in which we continually re-imagine ourselves from different perspectives, but rather one that is closely related to the classical philosophical goal of caring for the soul. (Savage, 2002, pp. 177-8)

Dewey specifies the types of internal development that would allow individuals to gain autonomy. Not surprisingly, the characteristics each individual needs to develop to achieve autonomy are the characteristics needed to participate in an ideal democratic society – which is one that has its ultimate goal as the development of each individual.

⁹ While this ideal view of democracy may be considered Pollyannaish by some since the world has never seen such a democracy and, for many reasons, may never be able fully to achieve a democracy of this type, specifying the characteristics of this ideal can still be helpful for identifying aspects of this ideal that could be strengthened in our own democracy, leading to its greater health, depth, and sustainability.

This intertwining of individual and community in Dewey's conception of democracy is both important and strikingly beautiful.

According to Dewey, an ideal democracy requires the following four criteria:

1. Individual expression: The ability and willingness of individuals to express their thoughts, feelings, judgments, desires, and needs.
2. Communicated experience: An open communication between members of the political community concerning the experience of each individual and sub-group.
3. Associated living: Conjoint activity and mutual care developed between members of the community who are in relationship with one another.
4. Consciousness of the connection of individual activities: An awareness of the effect each individual's activities have on the lives of every other member of the community.

Dewey's first criterion is often heralded as the hallmark of democracy: individual expression. Even Plato, who ostensibly argues against democracy, recognizes that, "... in [a democratic] regime especially, all sorts of human beings come to be.... Just like a many-colored cloak decorated in all hues, this regime, decorated with all dispositions, would also look [the] fairest ..." (Plato, 557b-d). Democracy is notable for fostering a wide array of different human beings mainly because individuals are encouraged to express their beliefs and needs even, and especially, when these beliefs and needs differ from those of other citizens. An ideal democracy is based on the belief that if each individual expresses what he believes is right and what he thinks he needs in order to live

the best life, an appropriate path for the country can be found. This foundation of democracy stems from the notion that individual men – when given the proper environment and tools – can make good judgments as to how they should live collectively and act together. It is based on a pervasive belief in the potential of each individual to contribute positively to society. And it is based on a conviction that the best form of government is one that is guided by the compromises reached between the varied views held and expressed by all individuals within a community.

This process of compromise and collective direction cannot be achieved without the second criterion for democracy, communicated experience, or an open communication between members of the political community, concerning the experiences of each individual and sub-group. If each individual does not communicate his or her experience and express his or her individual views, judgments, and desires in a way that others can understand, then the democratic process of citizens working together to achieve compromise and improvement is less likely to achieve a common good. Individual expression and communication are closely related, both require expression, but communication also requires a concerted effort by individuals to understand one another, and this exchange is partially facilitated by Dewey's third criteria.

In addition to the means and ability for individuals to communicate their experience and express their needs, beliefs, and judgments, an ideal democracy also requires associated living. Dewey explains that, “[f]ree and open communication, unself-seeking and reciprocal relationships, and the sort of interaction that contributes to mutual

advantage, are the essential factors in associated living” (Dewey, 1919-1920, p. 92). This means that associated living can be attained by fostering the growth of individuals so that free intercourse, unhampered exchange of ideas, mutual respect, friendship, and love – in short, those modes of behaving which make life richer and more worth living – can be achieved (Dewey, 1919-1920, p. 90). Hence, the development of individuals and their abilities to express themselves and communicate their experiences to one another are the first steps necessary for living in association with one another. Likewise, without associated living, the development of individuals also cannot be fully achieved. Dewey explains:

When people exist under arrangements which call for some to rule and others to be ruled, some to command and others to obey, integration of the society cannot proceed, nor can the society hope to remain stable, because this disparity of status and function breeds conflict and induces disorder. At the same time, this pattern of dominance and subservience makes the development of personality extremely difficult if not impossible – and strangely enough, this is as true of members of the dominant group as it is of those in the subservient group. (Dewey, 1919-1920, p. 92)

As we saw above, Dewey believes “democracy [to be] more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (Dewey, 1916, 7.2.2). Hence, Dewey believes that while there is “lack of the free and equitable intercourse which springs from a variety of shared interests” or while activity is “restricted to a few definite lines - as it is when there are rigid class lines preventing adequate interplay of experiences – [action will tend] to become routine on the part of the class at a disadvantage, and capricious, aimless, and explosive on the part of the class having the materially fortunate position” (Dewey, 1916, 7.1.7). And this

unbalanced situation, according to Dewey, will detract from how democratic a society is and will likely lead a “partial-democracy” to quickly erode.

According to Dewey, associated living and the social concern of every citizen is necessary for a democracy because without it a democracy cannot sustain itself. Without a social interest held among the citizens, civic education will not be supported and the development and growth of individuals and their abilities to share information will not be developed, leading to the downfall of democracy. But associated living is important for reasons beyond its necessity for fostering individual growth and participation. In every society there will be differing views and disagreements in judgment, if people are going to live together successfully these conflicts must be dealt with in some way. The only democratic way to deal with such difficulties is to encourage communication and the active working together of citizens to reach an agreement or a compromise, because a solution imposed externally and not arrived at by the people will not be democratic. And the only way to achieve this communication and work is for each citizen to care for the interests of the other citizens and the good of the society as a whole. Without a social interest among the citizenship great enough to motivate dialogue, and an ordering of society that allows the necessary associations, a democratic solution to the problems that arise from living together will be unlikely to exist.¹⁰

Dewey’s fourth criterion is consciousness of the connection between citizens and their actions.

¹⁰ This explanation of Dewey’s understanding of associated living was influenced by *John Dewey and American Democracy*, by Robert B. Westbrook, 2001, pp. 246-250.

[M]an is not merely *de facto* associated, but he *becomes* a social animal in the make-up of his ideas, sentiments and deliberate behavior. *What* he believes, hopes for and aims at is the outcome of association and intercourse. ... The planets in a constellation would form a community if they were aware of the connections of the activities of each with those of the others and could use this knowledge to direct behavior. (Dewey, 1927, p. 25)

According to Dewey, it is our consciousness of the connection of our activities with others that creates community. A mere ordering or form of society does not, in itself, create community. It is our conscious interaction with one another that makes us social and that produces associated living, and it is our conscious democratic participation and interaction with one another that makes our society democratic. A mere governmental structure blindly followed will not lead to democracy in its fullest sense.

To pull at a rope at which others happen to be pulling is not a shared or conjoint activity, unless the pulling is done with knowledge that others are pulling and for the sake of either helping or hindering what they are doing. A pin may pass in the course of its manufacture through the hands of many persons. But each may do his part without knowledge of what others do or without any reference to what they do; each may operate simply for the sake of a separate result -- his own pay. There is, in this case, no common consequence to which the several acts are referred, and hence no genuine intercourse or association, in spite of juxtaposition, and in spite of the fact that their respective doings contribute to a single outcome. But if each views the consequences of his own acts as having a bearing upon what others are doing and takes into account the consequences of their behavior upon himself, then there is a common mind; a common intent in behavior. There is an understanding set up between the different contributors; and this common understanding controls the action of each. (Dewey, 1916, 3.2.2)

Without consciousness of the bearing each individual's actions have on the other individuals within the community, no amount of individual expression, communication of experience, or associated living will produce a true democracy. To live up to the full ideal of democracy, citizens within a democracy must be aware of the effect their actions,

decisions, judgments, thoughts, and feelings have on each other and the wellbeing of the society as a whole. The citizens must also cultivate a social concern and foster genuine relationships with each other through meaningful work, communication, and expression, and this will in turn lead to the growth and development of each individual and strengthen his desire and ability to express himself and communicate his experiences. In this way, the four criteria necessary for an ideal democracy are themselves integrally related; each one depending upon, as well as strengthening, the others.

These four essential criteria for democracy, identified by Dewey, provide further guidance for successful civic education. These criteria suggest that civic education should be significantly involved in the individual self-development of citizens, especially in ways that support these four essential traits. In Chapter 2, I discuss the importance of civic virtues for democracy and identify specific examples of democratic civic virtues, the development of which within citizens will support each of these four characteristics.

THE CREATIVE DYNAMIC: A BALANCED TENSION

Dewey's conception of self-development, and thus of democracy, also involves his unique understanding of personal autonomy: "[A]utonomy can be seen as a potentiality that all humans possess. A potentiality that may be realized by degrees. Further, because it is the means to the good, and human society is concerned with the good of its members, it becomes the responsibility of society to cultivate this potentiality in all of its members" (Savage, 2002, p. 37). Hence, in following Dewey's democratic

theory his understanding of what is necessary for the development of citizens' personal autonomy must also be understood.

Dewey explains that, in addition to dispositions that support the characteristics discussed in the previous section, individuals require a balance of opposing traits within them in order to become truly autonomous. This balance must occur between individual dispositions – which push us toward differentiation – and communal dispositions – which pull us toward integration. Dewey believes that the virtues which make individual autonomy possible should not be conceived of separately, but rather the “tension created by [their] synthesis...keeps each from degenerating into the excess toward which it tends. *Together* they constitute the autonomous individual” (Savage, 2002, p. 117). This means that while the virtues which support the four characteristics above are necessary for individual autonomy, their development must be achieved in a balanced way in order to produce genuine personal freedom.

There is tension that can arise between the interests and wellbeing of an individual and that of his society – between, what I call, his individual and communal dispositions. This tension is real and it should not be overlooked. However, the fact that this tension exists does not mean that individuals must compromise themselves, go against their natural inclinations, or be coerced in order to join together in, and contribute to, community.

It is sometimes assumed, explicitly or unconsciously, that an individual's tendencies are naturally purely individualistic or egoistic, and thus antisocial. Control then denotes the process by which he is brought to subordinate his natural impulses to public or common ends. Since, by conception, his own nature is quite

alien to this process and opposes it rather than helps it, control has in this view a flavor of coercion or compulsion about it. Systems of government and theories of the state have been built upon this notion, and it has seriously affected educational ideas and practices. But there is no ground for any such view. Individuals are certainly interested, at times, in having their own way, and their own way may go contrary to the ways of others. But they are also interested, and chiefly interested upon the whole, in entering into the activities of others and taking part in conjoint and cooperative doings. Otherwise, no such thing as a community would be possible. (Dewey, 1916, 3.1)

Dewey's point is that, naturally, men are not purely individualistic and antisocial. In addition to individual tendencies or dispositions, men are also interested in taking part in conjoint and cooperative activity. Community and a desire for community are as natural and necessary to man as his individual desires.

Men's individual rights must be seen within the context of his relationships and connections with others just as his individual rights need to be valued and protected within these relationships. The encouragement, development, and protection of individual rights and expression require that concern within each citizen for every other citizen, as well as for the society as a whole, be fostered and encouraged. Associated living and communicated experience are necessary for the protection and maintenance of individual rights and growth just as much as individual rights and personal development and growth are necessary for the protection and continuance of a democratic society where all individuals can associate and communicate freely.

Regard for the group requires self-discipline, not self-sacrifice. Acting collectively for the good of the group is the means to self-development. 'In a justly organized social order, the very relations which persons bear to one another demand of the one carrying on a line of business the kind of conduct which meets the needs of others, while they also enable him to express and fulfill the capacities of his own being.' (Dewey *Later Works* 7: 299) Thus, the democratic community

requires individuals to contribute to a collective welfare that is itself the means for individual self-development. The strength and energy of the community and that of the individuals that constitute it are inseparable. (Savage, 2002, p. 117)

Far from Dewey's assertion of inseparability between individuals and community, Savage explains that "a false dichotomy between the individual and the community was created by the contract theorists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who erroneously posited the naturalness of isolated individuals in opposition to the artificial authority of the community" (Savage, 2002, p. 23). This view typifies a Liberal view of democracy where "the individual is seen as an autonomous agent seeking to defend and expand his or her own piece of the pie against other autonomous interests, mediated by government structures to reduce conflict (Wilson and Lowery, 2003, p. 50). Unfortunately, in response to the liberal view, Communitarians have argued from the other side. The communitarian view "privilege[s] the concept of community by reifying it into a single set of values and norms to which the individual must subordinate him or herself¹¹ (Wilson and Lowery, 2003, p. 50). As I have shown, in contrast to both of these perspectives, Dewey "point[s] out the falsity of the dichotomy" (Savage, 2002, p. 230) and argues that the correct understanding of democracy contains a balance between these two aspects of human nature: "As a moral ideal [democracy] is thus an endeavor to unite two ideas which have often worked antagonistically: liberation of individuals on one hand and promotion of a common good on the other" (Dewey, 1908, p. 349).

¹¹ See for example the work of Michael Sandel, Robert Bellah, and Charles Taylor.

In this quote, Dewey says that as a moral ideal democracy must endeavor to unite individual and communal impulses. Previously, we also saw that Dewey said the moral meaning of democracy is to be found in resolving to create every part of a democracy with the goal of contributing to the “all-around growth of every member of society.” While these two statements might at first seem to posit different moral views of democracy, they are in fact one and the same for Dewey, because the all-around growth and development of citizens requires the development of individual freedom and autonomy, which, he says, requires the development of a balance between their individual and communal dispositions.

As I previously said, Dewey’s understanding of democracy rests a very specific understanding of individual autonomy and freedom. This type of freedom comes from transforming competing parts of the self by honoring and developing our individual needs, desires, experiences, wishes, and judgments while also respecting and cultivating our yearning for communication, association, cooperation, community, and care of others. Sandra Rosenthal refers to this development as creating “the proper dynamic relationship between the two poles of the self” (Rosenthal, 1993) and Mary Ann Glendon speaks of a vital democratic society as one “with a creative tension between individual freedom and the general welfare” (Glendon, 1993, p. 110). Combining these two terms, I call this balance between individual and communal dispositions – so essential for individual autonomy and democratic freedom – a creative dynamic. Hence, by developing a creative dynamic within each citizen, a democracy can itself become a

fulcrum point, balancing individual rights and communal needs throughout the society as a whole.

The literature on deep democracy¹², in contrast to that on liberal democracy and communitarian democracy, reflects this same understanding of unity and balance between individuals and the community. In *Deep Democracy: The Inner Practice of Civic Engagement* Patricia A Wilson emphasizes – similarly to Dewey – that democracy is created and maintained through the development and practice of its citizens. She explains deep democracy as:

[A]n organizing principle based on the transformation of separation to interconnectedness in the civic arena. Deep democracy is not what elected representatives do, nor experts, nor large public institutions, nor voters. At its essence, deep democracy is the inner experience of interconnectedness. (2004, p. 1)

Wilson’s conception of deep democracy fleshes out the understanding of democracy Dewey offers with the four tenants discussed in the previous section:

For the individual, deep democracy is the enfranchisement of self at the level of mind, heart, and spirit: the realization that “I count.” It is the exercise of one’s membership in a larger whole, the acceptance of one’s responsibility for that whole, and the desire to act for the good of the whole: the realization that “I care.” (2004, p. 1)

¹² Deep democracy has three formative roots: “social learning, which traces its origins to John Dewey’s pragmatist philosophy of learning from action for the betterment of all; organizational development, which focuses on the transformational nature of participation in groups; and whole systems theory, which puts forth the organizing principle of the interconnected web of social actors. On a more applied level, the prominent concepts behind deep democracy include social capital, interpersonal communication (especially dialogue, deep listening, and non-violent communication), negotiation and conflict resolution (including mutual gains and third-sider approaches .i.e. not right and wrong, but both-and), appreciative inquiry, community participation (including the Intermediate Technology literature on scaling up), communitarian thought, and the literature on learning organizations. Also relevant here is the literature on women’s ways of knowing, indigenous ways of knowing and decision making, and education for participation” (Wilson and Lowery, 2003, pp. 50-1).

When Dewey's first two criteria of democracy – expression and communication – are taken up and practiced by citizens, this behavior can be characterized as the realization, by those citizens, that their experiences, judgments, needs, and actions count and provide an essential contribution to the successful governance of their community. Similarly, the recognition and practice of Dewey's second two criteria – associated living and consciousness of connection – can be characterized as the realization by citizens that they care, about the wellbeing of others and the good of the whole. At its most fundamental level, Wilson's notion of deep democracy and Dewey's notion of democracy both require citizens who believe that their voices and actions count *and* who recognize and care about their connection and relationship to other citizens and the community as a whole – a balanced development of both aspects is required.

The following chart summarizes the tension between individual and communal dispositions and shows the point of balance between them that can be found in the creative dynamic. Within the chart are placed the various views and characteristics previously discussed, showing where they fall in regard to this tension and creative dynamic.

Chart 1: Locating the Creative Dynamic

Individual Dispositions	Creative Dynamic	Communal Dispositions
Liberal Democracy	Pragmatism, John Dewey, Deep Democracy	Communitarian Democracy
Individualism	Democratic Citizens	Cultural Context
Freedom	Democratic Citizens	Authority

Chart 1 shows how Pragmatism, the philosophy of Dewey, and Deep Democracy all posit views that combine notions that have traditionally been seen as dichotomous and typified by Liberal and Communitarian views of democracy. Pragmatism, Dewey, and Deep Democracy also all posit healthy democratic citizens as developing both individual and communal dispositions, skills, and traits. In their views, healthy democratic citizens come about by developing a creative dynamic.

If we take a microscope to the center column of Chart 1, we might see the following further details.

Chart 2: Details of the Creative Dynamic

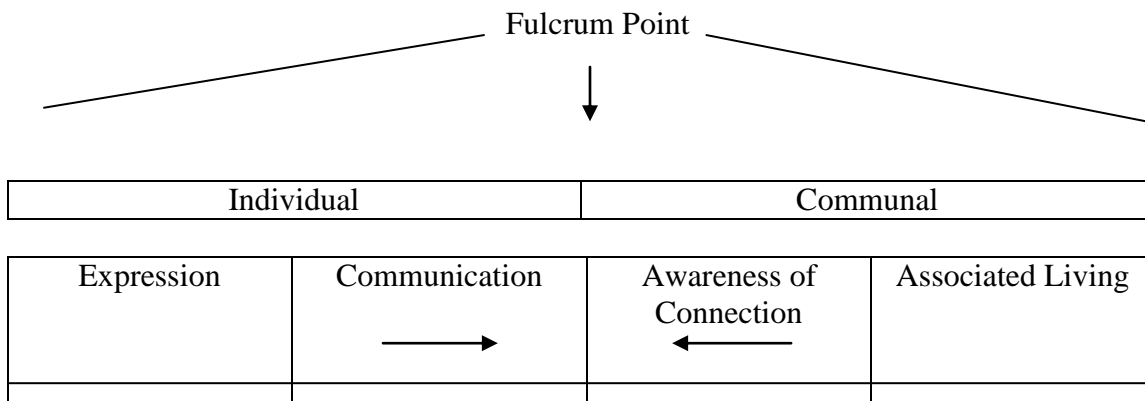


Chart 2 shows the details of how to develop democratic citizens that fall within the creative dynamic shown in the Chart 1. This creative dynamic between individual freedom and general welfare can be achieved by developing in a balanced way the four criteria identified, in the previous section, as essential for democracy by Dewey. The first criterion – individual expression – requires that citizens develop the ability and willingness to express their thoughts, feelings, judgments, desires, and needs. Required for this criterion to be met is that each individual develops and takes seriously his or her own needs, desires, and values, i.e. his individual dispositions. Without a development of and a respect for these individual dispositions an ideal democracy cannot exist. The second criterion – communication – is also rooted within individual dispositions, but requires an additional concern for and a consideration of other. To successfully communicate an experience, listening to and understanding those you are communicating with, as well as making sure that your intended meaning has been understood, are both necessary. Hence, communication necessarily brings individuals into relationship with one another and requires at least some concern for others, pointing toward communal dispositions.

The third criterion – associated living – falls squarely within men's care and concern for the common good, resting on his communal dispositions. Associated living is the product of men's mutual care for one another and their desire to live in community and relationship with one another. The fourth criterion lies within man's communal dispositions but also must reach toward his individualistic nature. In order to be

conscious of the connection between individual activities, individuals must have an awareness of how the needs, rights, desires, and actions of individuals affect one another. This awareness requires a respect for the activities of individuals, as well as an appreciation and care for the connections that exist between them. Citizens who develop these four criteria balance the competing elements within themselves and achieve a creative dynamic, wherein freedom and autonomy is found.

If individual citizens are well-balanced and fully developed in both individual and community-building virtues, then the tension between their individual and communal dispositions can become creative and freeing – allowing them to utilize whichever skills and virtues work best in each situation, often balancing the need for two competing ways of being. Likewise, a democracy that is made up of well-balanced citizens can itself become a fulcrum point, encouraging and protecting both individual development and rights and those that are necessary for forming and sustaining strong community and the common good. By harnessing this tension that naturally exists within man – between his individual needs and wants and his desire for and need to live within community – democracies can become societies that support, nurture, and protect true and lasting individual and political freedom.

Speaking to this point, Glendon says,

What we need therefore is ... a fuller concept of human personhood and a more ecological way of thinking about social policy. Groups are important, not for their own sake, but for their roles in setting the conditions under which individuals can flourish and order their lives together. Because individuals are partly constituted in and through their relationships with others, liberal politics dedicated to full and free human development cannot afford to ignore the settings

that are most conducive to the fulfillment of that ideal. In so doing, liberal politics neglects *the conditions for its own maintenance*. (1993, p. 137, emphasis added)

Glendon reiterates the point above: freedom and benefits gained by an individual in a liberal democratic society cannot be maintained without sustaining the social groups and orderings that nurture the seeds of individual freedom and support the full development of dignified human beings. Having individual rights and freedoms as well as being in relationship with others and belonging to community are all integral aspects of a complete human life and a healthy democracy. Just as men must embrace and use the dynamic that is created between gravity and their bodies in an up-right posture, in order to walk, so too must men in a democracy embrace and use the dynamic created between their individual and communal dispositions, in order to create and maintain a healthy and vibrant democracy where full human beings and flourishing communities can nurture and support one another's development.

Dewey's description of the creative dynamic indicates that adequate civic education in a democracy needs to develop individuals in a balanced way that makes the development of such a creative dynamic possible. Civic education must develop characteristics that support individual dispositions as well as those that support communal dispositions. By striving to develop such a balance civic education programs can hope to develop a creative dynamic within citizens that allows them to contribute to the health and sustainability of their democracy.

CONCLUSION

Democracy is a transformative ideal that's goal is the self-development of autonomous individuals through the unification of ideas and dispositions long believed to be irresolvable and locked in antagonistic tension. A pragmatic orientation to democracy, the work of Dewey, and literature on Deep Democracy all suggest that in contrast to this dichotomy between individual and communal dispositions – which is played out in liberal and communitarian views of democracy – democracy should be seen as a fulcrum point capable of actively balancing, supporting, and protecting both individual rights, needs, and interests, as well as communal interests needed to protect, develop, and support the common good of society as a whole. Democracy can become such a fulcrum point by developing individual and communal dispositions within citizens in a balanced way that leads to the development of a creative dynamic within each citizen. Such a creative dynamic is essential to the creation and maintenance of both individual and political freedom.

From this view of democracy there are several general beginning guidelines for successful civic education programs that can be identified:

- Civic education should focus on developing behaviors and traits that affect citizens' "ways of life" such that they embody a democratic way of being.
- General goals and methods for civic education should be provided but these should be flexible enough that the specifics of each school's needs, values, and inspirations can determine the details of their programs.

- All civic education programs should be continually evolving and transforming to solve emerging problems – they should not be static programs that stay the same for lengthy periods of time, unaffected by new problems or ideas. These programs should also aid students in developing the skills of participation and cooperation, in order that they can be involved in the problem-solving process of democracy.
- Ideals for our civic education programs should be cherished as leading to ever greater improvement. Although perfection should not be the goal, we should not shy away from high objectives and standards.
- Civic education should, within each citizen, develop dispositions or virtues that support the four essential criteria identified by Dewey: Individual expression, communicated experience, associated living, and consciousness of the connection between individual activities.
- Civic education should aim to develop democratic virtues within citizens in a balanced way that supports the development of both individual and communal dispositions, thus encouraging a creative dynamic.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the importance of civic virtues for democracy and provide specific examples of democratic civic virtues that should be developed in civic education programs in order to contribute to the development of each of Dewey's four criteria essential for democracy. In Chapter 3 I examine the history of civic education programs within American public schools and show that the same dichotomy discussed in this

chapter, between individual and communal dispositions and their attenuating political theories, has also had a significant effect on civic education programs throughout our country's history. This chapter concludes with the assertion that successful civic education programs must strive to approach civic education in a balanced way that does not give too much emphasis to either individualism or the common good. In Chapter 4, I then provide evidence that these theoretical considerations are relevant to American democracy today.

America today is far from an ideal democracy. Split in our beliefs, unengaged in the civic process, disconnected from fellow citizens, and often unaware of the harm caused by our lack of participation, care, and responsibility, we have a long way to go before our democracy approaches the ideal form proposed by Dewey – and many factors make this achievement unlikely. Far from deterring our efforts, however, these facts should motivate us to find ways to improve our democracy. Looking to Dewey's theory of ideal democracy is the first step in my attempt to do just that. By identifying standards for successful civic education, from Dewey's theory, I then show that the conscious re-crafting of school aesthetics can provide a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the improvement of American civic education, and thus to American democracy. Even though American democracy can never be an ideal democracy this does not mean that we should not, nor that we cannot, achieve great improvements.

Chapter 2: Democratic Civic Virtues

“Is there no virtue among us? If there be not, we are in a wretched situation. No theoretical checks, no form of government, can render us secure. To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in the people is a chimerical idea.”
– James Madison (1788)

American democracy was from the start, and continues to be, an experiment. It is an experiment in the abilities of free individuals to come together and successfully maintain a government that protects these freedoms while also providing the benefits and privileges of community.

Americans, though, have tended to forget that their version of democracy *is* an experiment, one that requires (as the authors of *The Federalist Papers* put it) a higher degree of virtue in its citizens than any other form of government (Paine quoted in Wood, 1992). As a result, we have neglected a basic problem of politics – how to foster in the nation’s citizens the skills and virtues that are essential to the maintenance of our democratic regime. (Glendon, 1993, pp. 1-2)

These characteristics, dispositions, traits, and skills, which underlie behaviors essential for the maintenance of our democratic regime, I call democratic civic virtues. I use the term virtue because, “[w]ords like ‘virtue’ and ‘character’ have nearly disappeared from the lexicon of the modern human sciences” (Glendon, 1993, p. 5), and it has become common to shy away, especially, from the term virtue, when discussing modern politics and society. This avoidance has coincided with, if it has not played an active role in causing, a lack of consideration of both how essential these democratic civic virtues are and the ways in which these virtues can best be developed. I use the term virtue to catch the reader’s attention and direct it to how infrequently the virtues of our

citizenry are given the attention they deserve. I also use the term virtue to hearken back to past times and traditions when the need for developing and working on yourself, in order both to live an excellent life and to live well with others, was recognized and supported. As discussed at the end of Chapter 1, an ideal democracy relies especially on the development and internal balance of its citizens, so the development of virtues has special prescience for citizens of democratic communities.

In this chapter, while defining what I mean by democratic civic virtue, I also address how essential democratic civic virtues are for democracy and how these virtues can be developed. I cover these topics in the following sections:

- The Importance of Democratic Civic Virtues for Democracy: In this section I explain the connection between democracy and democratic civic virtue along with how and why an ideal democracy – as defined in Chapter 1 – depends on the development of civic virtue in its citizens.
- Citizen Virtue: More Important than Institutional Structure: This section contains an explanation of how and why the development and existence of civic virtues in citizens is more important to democracy than the structure of its institutions.
- Democratic Civic Virtues: Specific Examples: In this section I provide ten examples of civic virtues, the development of which support each of Dewey's four essential characteristics of democracy. These forty civic virtues are categorized based on which of the characteristics they support. Throughout the rest of the dissertation I use these examples to provide empirical support for my

thesis, that beautiful school aesthetics can develop these virtues, in a balanced way, in students.

- Democratic Civic Virtue: Context Sensitive. Not Relativistic: This section contains an explanation of why a list of examples (always open to addition and revision), instead of an un-changing, exhaustive list of democratic civic virtues, is appropriate for a pragmatic view of democracy and yet does not come from a relativistic view of virtue.
- Habituation: Necessary for the Development of Democratic Civic Virtues: This section shows that democratic civic virtues must be developed and cannot be assumed to emerge on their own. It also urges that habituation plays an important role in their development.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEMOCRATIC CIVIC VIRTUES FOR DEMOCRACY

As discussed in Chapter 1, Dewey understands democracy as a way of life pursued by individuals who have developed, or more accurately, are in the process of developing, character traits or civic virtues that lead to behaviors essential to the health and depth of democracy. “Democratic citizens...require specific dispositions conducive to cooperative inquiry” (Savage, 2002, p. 96), including free expression, communication, associative living, and a consciousness of connection. This view of democracy depends heavily on citizen development of democratic civic virtues. As Savage points out, “It is important to understand that Dewey is not merely saying that it would be nice if more

people had these virtues, he is saying that the existence of liberalism and genuine democracy (as opposed to mere external forms) requires citizens with these virtues” (Savage, 2002, p. 100).

Dewey is not alone in recognizing the essential role of civic virtues in democracy. In *The Role of Civic Education*, Margaret Stimmann Branson, the Associate Director of the Center for Civic Education, explains the essential foundational role played by the civic virtues or dispositions of the American populace:

Civic dispositions, or the “habits of the heart,” as Alexis de Tocqueville called them, can scarcely be overemphasized. The traits of public and private character that undergird democracy are, in the long run, probably of more consequence than the knowledge or skills a citizen may command. (1998)

The necessity of civic virtue for the proper function and safeguard of the country has been recognized since our country’s inception. Thomas Jefferson spoke to this point:

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion. (Jefferson, 1820)

A comment made by George Washington also strengthens this sentiment: “In proportion as the structure of government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened” (Washington, 1796).

The list of supporters of the view that democracy depends heavily on civic virtue within its citizenry is great. Consider a handful of representatives of these views:

- At some point, the attenuation of individual virtue will create pathologies with which liberal political contrivances, however technically perfect their design, simply cannot cope. To an extent difficult to measure but impossible to ignore,

the viability of liberal society depends on its ability to engender a virtuous citizenry. (Galston, 1991, p. 217)

- [J]ustice as fairness includes an account of certain political virtues – the virtues of fair social cooperation such as the virtues of civility and tolerance, of reasonableness and the sense of fairness [support]...the forms of judgment and conduct essential to sustain fair social cooperation over time [and therefore] characterize the ideal of a good citizen of a democratic state. (Rawls, 1993, pp. 194-195)
- Institutions have to be worked and used by citizens in the right spirit. Certainly citizens need a very great array of knowledge and skills for life in a democracy, but they also need to be disposed to use their knowledge and skills democratically. They need democratic dispositions. (White, 1996, p. 1)
- To be successful, liberal democracies depend upon a wide dissemination of traits and capacities often thought to be the province of the few rather than the many (Spragens, 1999, p. 231)
- For a liberal democracy to thrive and not only survive, many of its citizens should develop a shared commitment to a range of political values and virtues. (Macedo, 2000, pp. 10-11)

As Ian MacMullen (2013) says, “It is frankly hard to find contemporary dissenters from the proposition that liberal democracy depends importantly on the character virtues of its citizens” (p. 4).

Within this dissertation I ascribe to what MacMullen describes as the orthodox view of civic virtue and its development, held by contemporary political and educational theorists. I ascribe to this view because, aside from being the current mainstream perspective, these views also are compatible with the definition of democracy given in Chapter 1. The five main tenants of this position, as described by MacMullen (2013, pp. 1-2), are the following:

1. Liberal democracy depends on certain character traits among citizens.
2. These traits will not be sufficiently strong or widespread unless they are intentionally cultivated in citizens, especially during childhood.
3. The traits can be cultivated without compromising the capacity of citizens to legitimate their political institutions via suitably free and authentic consent.
4. It is both permissible and prudent for the state itself to engage in this cultivation of civic character (although it may well be best for some of the work to be done by non-state actors such as parents, private schools, religious groups, and other voluntary associations).
5. Because citizens' capacity and disposition to think critically about political authority are so important in a liberal democracy (for reasons that include but are not limited to the legitimacy issue referenced in #3 above), shaping of character for civic purposes should not extend beyond inculcating the basic and universal moral values that constitute the ideal of liberal democracy itself.

The first tenant of the orthodox view - that democracy depends upon civic virtues - was shown to have widespread support among contemporary theorists and it is why my thesis focuses on the improvement of democratic civic virtues. In the fourth section of this chapter, I argue for the second orthodox view, that democratic civic virtues must be intentionally cultivated in citizens, especially during childhood, and I extend this claim by examining the important role of habituation in the cultivation of virtue. I discuss the fourth orthodox view – that the state should engage in the cultivation of civic character – in Chapter 3, which examines the history of civic education within schools and reasons that schools should play a central role in the development of civic virtues. The third and fifth points – limiting civic education to that which does not impose upon critical thinking free and authentic consent – however, while as written, are in agreement with my thesis,

require further discussion and clarification in order to emphasize an important difference that highlights the necessity of balance within democracy.

The view upon which points three and five are based shares the dichotomy discussed in Chapter 1 between individual and communal dispositions. According to MacMullen, points three and five originate from a view that prioritizes "autonomy over...other valuable traits that have traditionally been fostered by civic education, [such as] law-abidingness, civic identification, and support for the fundamental political institutions of one's society" (2013, pp. 1-2). Ultimately, MacMullen argues against this view, aiming "to show how we can recover an appreciation of the value of the kinds of character formation that civic education has traditionally involved without losing the portion of the truth that can be found in the orthodox view" (2013, pp. 1-2). He argues "that this orthodox ideal neglects character traits that, although commonly labeled "conservative," are realistically essential for the survival and flourishing of liberal democracies" (MacMullen, 2013, pp. 1-2).

While the outcome of MacMullen's argument - and others like it¹³ - is similar to the position advocated by Dewey and argued for in Chapter 1, these attempts at

¹³ Within the literature on educational theory this dichotomy between "liberal" values of autonomy and "conservative" ideals of civic responsibility and communal values is often characterized as a difference between civic and character education. In *Character Education, Citizenship, and Education*, John Douglas Hoge explains the kinds of distinctions often made between character and civic education: character education is often viewed as the education of morally good individuals who care about the common good and civic education is concerned purely with political knowledge and skills aimed at contributing to the political order while preserving individual autonomy. Chapter 3 - on civic education and schools - explores the intricacies of this conceptual separation. Here I wish to emphasize that these distinctions within political and educational theory both come from the same dichotomy, discussed in Chapter 1, between individual and communal dispositions.

reconciliation lack a theoretical foundation that recognizes the initial dichotomy between individual and communal dispositions as false. According to Dewey, the "basic and universal moral values that constitute the ideal of liberal democracy itself" – referenced in point 5 of the orthodox view – necessarily contain virtues which come from both individual and communal dispositions. For individuals to be truly free and autonomous and for democracies to be healthy and sustainable, Dewey argues, individuals must develop and be given the opportunity both to express themselves individually and communicate their unique experiences as well as to join together in cooperative and associative living and gain a consciousness of the connection between the actions of all citizens. The difference between Dewey's approach and that of MacMullen is that they take the basic and universal moral values that constitute the ideal of liberal democracy to be two different things.

Both MacMullen and the orthodox view take the basic values that constitute liberal democracy to be limited to those that can be classified as individual dispositions. While the orthodox view tries to limit the education of civic virtues to protect individual

From a practical point of view, Hoge argues, similarly to MacMullen, that character education and civic education both have important contributions to make in the education and development of democratic citizens. He recognizes that to be a good citizen you also need to be a good person. Additionally, the National Committee of Social Studies' Position Statement (1997) states that,

Personal virtue is often a contribution to the development of civic virtue...It is inadvisable to make sharp distinction between private and public virtue...For example, a person possesses the personal virtue of honesty when that person can be counted on to be consistently honest in dealing with others. A person possesses the civic virtue of respect for the worth and dignity of others when he or she can be counted on to behave in a manner consistent with that value. It is clear, however, that honesty and respect for others are relevant to both civic and private life. (NCSS Position Statement, 1997, p. 24)

autonomy from communal encroachment, MacMullen tries to expand civic education to include civic virtues that can be categorized as communal disposition. The problem with this view, and with MacMullen's argument against it, is that they both fail to recognize that a balance between individual and communal dispositions is itself essential to the ideal of liberal democracy. MacMullen is arguing that civic education should include more than the essential virtues that shape the ideal of democracy, while Dewey argues that the virtues MacMullen is trying to add are already necessarily contained within the notion of ideal democracy and the essential virtues that contribute to it. This distinction is small, but it is worth noting because it highlights the importance of balance between individual and communal dispositions in the view of democracy I advocate. Further, it emphasizes that this balance is not something extraneous to democracy, which people of a certain persuasion might argue for – like MacMullen – but is rather essential to the very ideal of democracy itself.

Liberal democracy and free autonomous citizens require a balanced development and the "basic and universal moral values" essential for liberal democracy themselves contain values and virtues which both promote critical, creative individuality and sociable, cooperative, communal interactions. It is not that we need to combine conservative values along with liberal ideals as MacMullen suggests. Rather, the essence of democracy, and of the civic virtues necessary to support it, by definition, must contain a balanced development of individual and communal dispositions. These are not two

isolated or separate endeavors which need to guard against one another, but rather two essential parts of a complete understanding of democratic civic virtue.

Simply put, although as they are written, Dewey and I agree with points three and five of the orthodox view, in reality these points – and the arguments against them given by MacMullen – assume a dichotomy between individual and communal dispositions and attempt to guard against the overstepping of communal dispositions in civic education by limiting the development of civic virtues. Following Dewey, I argue that civic education and the development of civic virtues should – and to be beneficial to democracy, must – include a development of both individual and communal dispositions in a balanced way that allows individuals to achieve true autonomy – necessarily bounded within the context of community – through the development of a creative dynamic.

This section shows that both Dewey and many contemporary theorists believe that democratic civic virtues are essential for democracy. Throughout the dissertation I follow the five tenants of the current orthodox view on the subject, with the qualification that the virtues that support the essential basis of liberal democracy necessarily include a balance between individual and communal disposition.

CITIZEN VIRTUE: MORE IMPORTANT THAN INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES

This section attempts to validate the insular focus on civic virtues and the absence of discussion on the structure of democratic institutions within this dissertation. It is not that the structure of institutions, within a democracy, is of no consequence. Rather, it is

that even the institutions within a democracy depend upon a foundation of civic virtue within its citizenry: “The best way to establish and maintain democratic institutions, rules, and norms is to cultivate a community of autonomous citizens [that is, those with specified intellectual and moral virtues]. Democratic procedures are of little practical use in a community of dogmatic, conformist, and docile individuals” (Savage, 2002, p. 102). Dewey reemphasizes the point that democracy cannot be externally imposed but must instead come from the free and independent wills of the people. He points out that “merely legal guarantees of civil liberties” do little to ensure “the essential condition of the democratic way of living.” When freedom and communication are choked by suspicion, abuse, fear, and hatred, democracy is destroyed just as surely as it is under “open coercion,” because open coercion “is effective only when it succeeds in breeding hate, suspicion, [and] intolerance in the minds of individual human beings,” without which no substantial oppression can occur. In fact, according to Dewey’s understanding, a form of democracy is possible even among a group of people under non-democratic rule – if they are freely expressing their views, have open communication, association, and consciousness of their connection – and it can be absent among a group of people within a political democracy. “Dewey taught that democratic political institutions are more the effect than the cause of democratic culture” (Savage, 2002, p. 101).

Eamonn Callan (1997) recognizes that “virtue is no substitute for judicious institutional design,” reminding us that democracy must also pay attention to institutional design. Callan goes on, however, to say, “but neither is institutional design any substitute

for virtue” (p. 7). Both are important and Dewey merely argues that "the establishment of...a [democratic] community begins with culturally habituated ways of thinking and acting and not with political institutions” (Savage, 2002, p. 119). Good institutions must rest on the foundation of civic virtue within citizens and have their highest goals be the development of individual citizens as well. Hence, the development of civic virtues within citizens is the beginning and the end of institutions, which are merely intermediary and ever-changing structures to aid in this process. For, as Savage says of Dewey’s view: “A political community is more or less worthy according to the degree to which it strives for and maintains institutions and laws that improve the moral and intellectual dispositions of its citizens” (Savage, 2002, p. 97). It is for these reasons that the focus of this dissertation is the development of democratic civic virtues within citizens.

DEMOCRATIC CIVIC VIRTUES: SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

This section discusses specific examples of democratic civic virtues that support the development and practice of Dewey’s four essential criteria for democracy. Dewey’s four criteria are not likely to emerge on their own, nor are they likely to thrive in a community where citizens have not developed civic virtues, which provide the impetus and foundation for these democratic behaviors. These behaviors – the expression of individual perspectives, the successful communication of unique experiences, conjoint activity and mutual care, and an awareness of the interconnection of individual choices

and activities – are each facilitated and supported by the development of specific characteristics or virtues, i.e. democratic civic virtues.

The specific examples of democratic civic virtues I give within this section, and return to throughout the dissertation, draw on many authors¹⁴ and a wide range of discussions within a varied literature, including: character education, civic education, social studies, and democratic theory. As examples I chose the virtues that show up repeatedly across many lists. Then, I chose a list of ten virtues that support each of Dewey’s four criteria. The following discussion of these virtues includes an examination of how each virtue contributes to one of Dewey’s criteria and thus to the overall health of democracy. The following points should be kept in mind throughout this discussion:

1. This discussion of virtues is a general one. The necessity of any one of these virtues is empirical, likely to change over time, and open to disagreement¹⁵.
2. There are undoubtedly virtues beneficial for democracy that this discussion omits.
3. These virtues are not ranked in importance. Longer discussions of some virtues do not indicate that they are necessarily more significant or beneficial than virtues discussed only briefly.

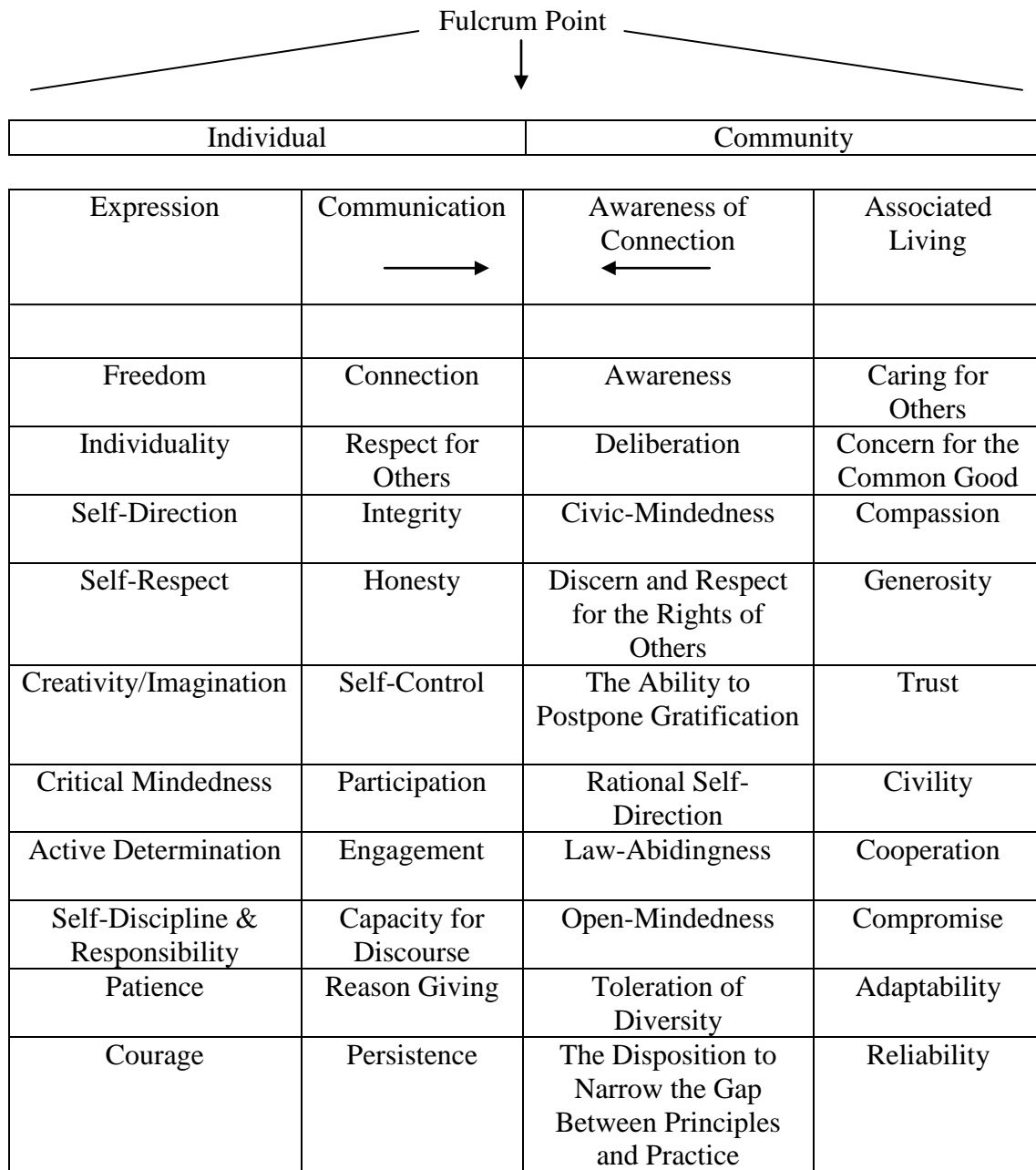
¹⁴ (White, 1999, p 62), (White, 1996), (Savage, 2002, footnote 15 p 10), (Gutman, 1987), (Macedo, 1990, pp. 266-267), (Macedo, 2000, pp. 10-11), (MacMullen, 2013, pp. 23-25), (Bull, 2006, p. 26), (Levinson 1999, p. 101), (National Council for the Social Studies, 1997, p 23-5), (Leming, 2001, p. 64), (Halstead & Pike, 2006), (Colby et al., 2003), (Sehr, 1997), (Butts, 1988), (Branson, 1998).

¹⁵ At the end of this section is a discussion of how I can assert that the necessity of each democratic civic virtue can be empirical, likely to change over time, and open to disagreement, without ascribing to a relativistic view of civic virtue. This discussion will show, rather, that these claims are rooted in a pragmatic understanding of democracy.

4. The importance of these virtues for democracy does not mean that every citizen must exhibit these virtues, but rather, the more citizens there are who possess these virtues, the healthier the democracy; while the fewer citizens there are who possess and guide their actions with these virtues, the greater the democracy's danger and level of decay.
5. While democratic civic virtues are a necessary component of good citizenship, the development of civic virtues alone is not sufficient for adequate civic education. (See further discussion on the necessity of knowledge, skills, and virtues for democratic citizenship, in Chapter 3).

Below, Chart 3: Examples of Civic Virtues, is the same as Chart 2 with the addition of specific examples of civic virtues, each of which supports one of Dewey's four criteria.

Chart 3: Examples of Democratic Civic Virtues



In what follows I discuss each of the civic virtues listed in this chart.

Individual Expression

In a democracy, where power and faith are given to the outcome created when each individual expresses his or her own views, his or her participation and individual expression is important. In order for citizens within a democracy to express themselves, each individual must have the ability and the willingness to both develop and then express their individual thoughts, feelings, judgments, desires, and needs. The development of the following ten civic virtues supports this type of expression in democratic citizens: freedom, individuality, self-direction, and self-respect; creativity and imagination, critical mindedness, and active determination; and self-discipline and responsibility, patience, and courage. Without the cultivation of civic virtues such as these, the individual needs and desires of democratic citizens will not be adequately developed, respected, or relied upon to contribute to the governance of a democratic community.

The first four virtues that support individual expression are freedom, individuality, self-direction, and self-respect. In order for individual expression to be possible, each individual must first be given the opportunity for freedom and self-direction in order to develop into an authentic individual. There must be room for independence of mind, spirit, and activity, in order for citizens to develop distinctive views, judgments, and feelings. They must be encouraged to pursue the development of their own individuality and self-respect. By cultivating individual freedom and self-direction within students, schools can help to ensure that citizens learn how to develop

their own opinions, make their own judgments, and respect their own feelings, needs, and desires. This type of independence and personal freedom is necessary to ensure that the citizenry is itself sovereign, and not controlled by a group or entity with ulterior motives. A pattern of this type of freedom, and support and respect for self-direction and individuality, will contribute to the development of citizens who are capable of and willing to express their distinct views, and through this process, to add to the richness of society and to contribute to the pooled resources used to guide the community.

Self-expression is a continual act of creation, both of oneself and of the surrounding community. Such expression requires creativity and imagination, critical mindedness, and active determination. The conscious expression of our true beliefs, judgments, and feelings contributes to the health and maintenance of a democratic society. Without being creative or knowing how and being willing to create, democratic citizens cannot build themselves into autonomous individuals, nor can they contribute uniquely to the formation and reformation of democratic society. Likewise, the act of expression is intricately related to the active determination of ourselves and our lives: The more we express ourselves the more thoroughly we know ourselves, create ourselves into individuals, and actively determine our lives; likewise, the more thoroughly we know ourselves, create ourselves, and actively determine our behavior and interactions, the better we can express ourselves. Imagination and critical mindedness also aid in the expression of citizens and strengthen the contributions citizens can make to their own development and to that of the community. Individuality and thus individual expression

are both enhanced and contributed to through the cultivation of imagination and critical mindedness because critical mindedness allows citizens to evaluate the surrounding world and imagination allows them to imagine how this world might be improved. Critical mindedness and imagination expand what citizens believe to be possible for themselves and for their community.

The final examples of virtues that contribute to the expression of democratic citizens are self-discipline and responsibility, patience, and courage. In order for democratic citizens to express themselves and share their individuality, they must be willing to take responsibility for what they think, feel, believe, and need, and they must also learn to take responsibility for expressing themselves. Without cultivating this responsibility citizens are likely either to be reluctant to express their views or to lack the effort required to do so. To know what it is you think, feel, believe, and need, can be difficult and it requires self-discipline to think often enough about who and what you are to be able to express this consistently. This processes of self-reflection, responsibility for your beliefs, and self-discipline that contributes to a commitment of self-expression also requires patience and courage because expressing yourself and contributing consistently to community through this expression can be difficult. Especially in the face of conflicting views and needs, to continue to express who you are and what you think and feel, and to share your needs, makes you vulnerable. It requires courage to continually reveal who you are to your community and to maintain trust that sharing this, even when

your views are unpopular, will be beneficial to building and sustaining a healthy community.

Cultivating these ten democratic civic virtues – freedom, individuality, self-direction, self-respect, creativity/imagination, critical mindedness, active determination, self-discipline/responsibility, patience, and courage – as well as other similar democratic civic virtues, contribute to the health and vitality of democracy by strengthening and respecting the qualities and characteristics of each individual citizen. Strengthening these individual dispositions, contributes to the reality of democratic citizens who can and do contribute to their democratic communities through their personal development and expression.

Communicated Experience

The second of Dewey's essential criteria for democracy is communicated experience, or an open communication between members of the political community concerning the experiences of each individual and sub-group. The first and second criteria can be seen as two sides of the same coin. The virtues categorized under the first criterion are necessary for self expression, the virtues categorized under the second criterion are necessary for successful communication, which requires listening to and understanding those you are communicating with, as well as making sure that your intended meaning has been understood. The virtues listed under criterion one allow you to create yourself and develop your own experiences, partially through individual

expression, while the virtues under criterion two develop the connection and interactions with other people necessary to successfully communicate with them, which goes a step beyond simple expression

I turn now to a discussion of ten virtues all of which support the communication of experience: connection and respect for others; integrity, honesty, and self-control; participation and engagement; capacity for discourse and reason-giving; and persistence. Beyond a community that provides the freedom necessary for people to develop and express independent beliefs, judgments, and feelings, a full democracy also requires successful communication between the members of the community. Communication is so fundamental for a healthy democratic society that without communicating their experiences a democratic community cannot make fully informed decisions together, based upon all the information known and experiences had by the different members of the community.

The first two virtues that support communicated experience are connection to and respect for others. Communication requires, at the least, the most basic form of connection. Without feeling and trying to create this connection, communication cannot occur. Wonderfully, the more people communicate, the greater their connection becomes, and the more their chances of communicating in the future grow. Without recognizing a connection of basic sentience, communication cannot even be attempted, but without feeling a more personal connection, trying to transfer your feelings and experiences to someone else will also be unlikely. Thus, the cultivation of connection between citizens

is important for successful communication. Beyond feeling a connection, in-depth communication – the communication of more than the most basic needs and demands – requires mutual respect. If you do not respect the person you are trying to communicate with, you will not spend the effort or take the time necessary to understand what they are saying or to share your own experiences. Part of respecting other people is respecting their experiences, what they think, and what they feel. If you respect these things and think they are important, you will be much more likely to understand what another is trying to communicate about them, as well as to make the effort necessary to share your own perspective. In these ways, developing connection and respect between citizens contributes to their successful communication and the health and vitality of their democracy.

To support successful communication, democratic citizens should also develop integrity, honesty, and self-control. If it matters to you that you represent yourself accurately, that you do not communicate only a partial truth, that your intended meaning be preserved and understood by others, this personal integrity and valuing of honesty will lead to stronger communication. Each citizen who has developed this kind of integrity and honesty will work hard to make sure they communicate their own experiences clearly, as well as making sure that they understand and represent the experiences of others accurately. To represent yourself effectively also requires self-control. You cannot simply express yourself however and whenever you please, you must listen and engage in discourse in a respectful manner that encourages clear communication, especially with

those of differing opinions. If you do not control yourself, and simply spew your beliefs in an offensive and disrespectful manner, you will hinder true communication by making the environment hostile and unsafe for contradictory views.

The next two virtues that support communication of experience are participation and engagement. Participation is necessary for communication because you have to relate yourself to the person you are trying to communicate with and take responsibility for the communication. Participation also entails activity, which is necessary for communication. In order to communicate effectively – even if you are only listening – you must play an active role. Communication is not facilitated by passivity. Engagement is also important for the success of communication. Not only do you have to take an active part in communicating, you also have to become, in some sense, interlocked with your interlocutor. Good communication requires that a bond be created which will hold your attention and capture your emotional commitment. Hence, participation and engagement are important virtues for ensuring the success of communicated experience among citizens.

The importance of communication for democracy makes engaging in discourse and reason giving important democratic civic virtues as well. The capacity and willingness for discourse should be developed in democratic citizens because democracy requires continual communication about public topics that extend beyond personal lives. Just communicating well with loved ones about personal matters is not enough for democratic citizens; they should also be able to communicate in the public realm about

political and community issues, bringing their personal experiences to bear on public topics. Within such discourse more must be done than merely stating how you feel and hearing the experiences of others. In the public realm, where decisions must be made for the entire community and where opinions and judgments may vary greatly, democratic citizens should be able to explain and support their beliefs and judgments with coherent reasoning. Giving reasons for what you believe and carefully explaining your perspective and needs will make it much easier for members of the community with differing views, experiences, and needs, to understand each others' situations and to work together to make mutually beneficial decisions.

The final example of civic virtues that contribute to successful communication is persistence. It is not easy to communicate well, especially with members of the community who have vastly different experiences. If democratic citizens are lazy, adequate communication will be likely not to occur. The kind of communication necessary to sustain the health of a democracy cannot fit within 15-second sound bites, nor be carried out through monologues aimed only at those with similar beliefs. To have successful communication among individuals and sub-groups within a democracy, the citizens must work tirelessly to create it again and again. Without persistence, democratic citizens, and their representatives, will shy away when conversations get difficult. Because of the wide variety of people and beliefs in a pluralistic liberal democracy, conflicting views will often arise, and this adversity must be continually met with the persistence necessary to follow through and achieve fruitful communication.

Clear, effective, and continuous communication is essential for a healthy and sustainable democracy. The virtues needed for communication require development of the individual with a view towards his engagement and interactions with other members of the community. Citizens who develop the ten civic virtues discussed above – connection and respect for others, integrity, honesty, self-control, participation, engagement, capacity for discourse, reason-giving, and persistence – will have a strong foundation upon which to build and practice successful communication.

Associated Living

Dewey's third criterion for democracy, associated living – conjoint activity and mutual care developed between members of the community who are in relationship with one another – is supported and developed by the following ten virtues: caring for others, concern for the common good, and compassion; civility; generosity and trust; cooperation, compromise, and adaptation; and reliability.

The first three examples of civic virtues that provide a foundation for associated living are caring for others, concern for the common good, and compassion. In a democratic society, members of the community are not forced to join in activity with one another, so associated living can only be developed if citizens learn to care for one another willingly and to consider each others' wellbeing. This type of care and consideration is necessary if members of a democratic community are to do more than simply live next to one another – to form real association, citizens have to develop the

capacity for connection with and care of others and the common good. Part of this care emerges from developing a sense of compassion for other people. Compassion entails “sympathetic consciousness of others’ distress together with a desire to alleviate it.¹⁶” Therefore, when compassion is lacking in democratic citizens, there is either no awareness of the feelings or pains of others, there is an awareness but no care for the people feeling the pain, or although there is awareness and care, there is no desire to take the action necessary to alleviate the pain (or not to cause the pain in the first place). In contrast, a healthy democracy is cultivated by engaged citizens who consider the needs and plights of other citizens and the good of the community as a whole and who desire to protect this good when they act.

In conjunction with care and compassion, generosity and trust are important democratic civic virtues. Once again, members of a democratic community must be internally motivated to contribute to the good of the whole and to consider the wellbeing of others, because external force requiring them to do so erodes the democratic nature of the community. A feeling of nobleness, virtuousness, and high-mindedness helps to inspire generous acts that are not immediately personally beneficial. Living and working together with others often requires contributing time and resources for the common good. Generosity and trust that help will be reciprocated encourage this type of commitment and contribution, inspiring members of the community to willingly sacrifice what seems

¹⁶ www.merriam-webster.com.

materially in their best interest in exchange for the reward of acting nobly and helping those in need. For as Adam Smith (1759) says in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*:

It is not the love of our neighbours, it is not the love of mankind, which upon many occasions prompts us to the practice of those divine virtues. [Rather it is] a stronger love, a more powerful affections, which generally takes place upon such occasions; the love of what is honourable and noble, of the grandeur, and dignity, and superiority of our own characters. (p. 21)

By trusting fellow members of society and striving to represent noble sentiments and to create an environment that encourages our highest impulses, practical outcomes, which help us live successfully together, can emerge.

Civility, etiquette, civilized conduct, courtesy, or politeness – regularly termed manners – is an often overlooked virtue and one that is much more important to the health of democracy than is usually recognized. One of Emily Post’s quotes brings to light the importance of manners: “Manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners, no matter what fork you use.¹⁷” As this quote shows, the importance of manners does not rest in the trivial details of high-society – what fork to use when – rather, manners are an awareness and respect for the feelings of others and require taking these into account before acting. Civility defines the behavior, actions, and interactions of someone who considers how their behavior and choices will affect everyone else in the community. Judith Martin (1993) makes a similar point, explaining that etiquette has historically played an essential role in

¹⁷ www.emilypost.com.

mediating the behavior of individuals who are trying to live happily together within a community:

Rather than being the crowning touch of good behavior in the upper reaches of a stratified society, etiquette is civilization's first necessity. Since time immemorial, etiquette has been used to establish the principles of social virtue as well as the rules, symbols, and rituals of civilized life. Historically, it preceded the invention of the law as a restraint of individual behavior for the common good, surely making etiquette the oldest deterrent to violence after fear of retaliation. Developmentally, it still precedes the teaching of moral concepts in the socialization of children. (p. 63)

Both historically and developmentally, etiquette has, and does, play an instrumental role in making associated living possible. If democratic citizens do not consider the feelings and needs of other citizens, there are no hierarchic structures or imposed demarcations of society to enforce appropriate behavior, which makes living together congenial and easy.

Martin asks, “[W]hat if the decline of etiquette *is* one of the most serious social problems, from which other serious social problems devolve merely as epiphenomena” (1993, p. 63)? This kind of question is rare in discussions concerning civic virtue, and the importance of manners, etiquette, and civility is routinely overlooked. Even so, it seems indisputable that if members of a community are taught to feel responsible for the effects of their behavior on other members of the community, and to consistently consider the feelings and needs of others before acting, they will be able to live and work together more easily than members of a community who have never learned to think of anyone beyond themselves and their own immediate desires.

What is important for democracy is that citizens learn to respect and consider the feelings and needs of others, and that they realize how their own behavior – and whether

they follow or ignore conventional standards of behavior – affects other members of society. It does not matter what manners children learn to follow, what matters is that they learn to follow some code of conduct and to understand the important role conventional codes of conduct have in contributing to and mediating associated living. Especially in a pluralistic liberal democracy, where people with many different customs and codes of conduct live side by side, it is important for citizens to be sensitive to the existence of different codes of conduct, or manners, and to recognize the importance of respecting and following the etiquette of a particular community when living and working within it. In a non-democratic society, where there are strict mandates for behavior and externally imposed obligations, it is not as important for the individual members of the community to be responsible for moderating his or her own behavior. In a democracy, however, it is essential for citizens to be conscious of the effects their own behavior has on others, and conscious of the important role manners, etiquette, and civility play in building and maintaining community. It is equally important, within a democracy, for members of the community to recognize that it is this awareness and respect that is most essential and not any one particular set of standards. “The attitude that the wishes of others do not matter is exactly what manners is intended to counter.... [T]he manners that are needed – although not always in evidence – are those associated with responsibility and compassion” (Martin, 1993, p. 69).

Cooperation, compromise, and adaptation are also important virtues for democratic citizens to develop. Without cooperation among their citizens, democracies

cannot accomplish much or govern themselves effectively – citizens working and acting together, of their own accord, and for mutual benefit, is essential for a healthy democracy. Likewise, a pluralistic liberal democracy requires citizens who know how to compromise. A community made up of people with many different views, beliefs, and needs, will only be able to govern the community together by reaching solutions that require some, if not all, the members involved to compromise on at least some aspect of what they believe to be best. This kind of compromise requires citizens who are adaptable. Members of a democracy will succeed at finding mutually agreeable solutions to problems and decide upon directions by which to guide the community much more easily if they are willing to be flexible, for the sake of the greater goal of successfully and collaboratively directing the community. A greater number of possible solutions will appear to citizens who look for more than one way to make things work. Members of the community who are too fixed, dogmatic, prejudiced, or closed-minded will have a hard time blending their voices together with the voices of other members of the community, in order to reach mutually acceptable decisions.

Cooperation, compromise, and adaptation are difficult to achieve. Associated living requires the support of the additional virtue of reliability in order to be maintained. Democratic citizens must work hard to continually strive together with other citizens – especially those with vastly different beliefs – in order to reach the best decisions for the community and this collaborative activity will be greatly enhanced when citizens feel

they can rely on one another to keep their words and engage in the necessary democratic processes.

By remaining loyal to your community and the ideal of democracy, by being a reliable member of the community who regularly contributes and is engaged, by taking personal responsibility for contributing to and finding the best solutions for the community, and by diligently working to practice these and other virtues beneficial to associated living, democratic citizens can achieve a successful, healthy, and vibrant democracy.

Awareness of Connection

According to Dewey,

We must devise means for bringing the interest of all the groups of a society into adjustment, providing all of them with the opportunity to develop, so that each can help the others instead of being in conflict with them. We must teach ourselves one inescapable fact: any real advantage to one group is shared by all groups; and when one group suffers disadvantage, all are hurt. Social groups are so intimately interrelated that what happens to one of them ultimately affects the well-being of all of them. (Dewey, 1919-1920, p. 71)

In this quote, Dewey expounds the necessary and inescapable relationship between all members of and all groups within a society. Once a community exists, both the wellbeing and disadvantage of its members are tied together, and the sooner the members of a group recognize the effects their thoughts, feelings, and actions have on one another, the sooner they will see the importance and consequences their individual expressions, communications of experience, social concerns (or lack thereof), and associations have

for the entire society. Awareness of this connection that exists between what seem like individual, separate activities, or an awareness of the effect each individual's activities have on other member of the community, is supported by the following ten civic virtues: Awareness and deliberation; civic-mindedness; discern and respect for the rights of others, the ability to postpone gratification, and rational self-direction; law-abidingness; open-mindedness and toleration of diversity; and the disposition to narrow the gap between principles and practice.

The first important virtue for supporting this fourth criterion is an awareness of the importance of democratic civic virtues for the health of democracy. This awareness requires a separate step from the development of the other civic virtues, because it is possible to practice many of the democratic civic virtues without being conscious of their importance; likewise, it is also possible to be aware of the importance of democratic civic virtues without having actually developed these virtues. The second civic virtue, deliberation, goes hand in hand with this awareness. By strengthening the powers of deliberation, both independently and together with others, the effects of each choice and action can be carefully considered and weighed before any action is taken.

Supporting a consciousness of the connection that exists between individuals and their activities is civic-mindedness. Civically minded citizens are inclined to look after those things relating to citizens, cities, citizenship, and community affairs. These members of the community actively work to meet the needs of the community and to foster the relationships that support and compose it. An important part of this task is

recognizing and supporting, both privately and publicly, the seedbeds of democratic civic virtue. As Glendon (1993) says, “There are conditions that are more, or less favorable to liberty, equality, and self-government; and those conditions involve the character and competence of citizens and public servants. But character and competence, too, have conditions, residing in nurture and education” (p. 2). And this nurture and education should be administered in childhood, what David Popenoe (1995) calls “the seedbed of social virtue” (p. 98). It is important, then, for democratic citizens to build and protect communities and institutions that support the education and nurturing of children.

David Popenoe points to the irony that just as we have begun to know more than ever about the childrearing conditions that foster competence and character, those conditions are ‘being eroded before our very eyes.’ ... He concludes that ‘to improve the conditions for childrearing in America today, nothing may be more important than trying to protect and cultivate those natural, tribal – or village-like communities that still remain – communities which have families as their basic building blocks, and in which a mix of people through free association and sets of relational networks maintain a common life.’ (Glendon, 1993, p. 7)

Glendon reminds the reader that, “stakes are high,” for whether democratic citizens protect and contribute to the seedbeds of democratic civic virtue:

[A]s Alexis de Tocqueville pointed out, if democratic nations should fail in ‘imparting to all citizens those ideas and sentiments which first prepare them for freedom and then allow them to enjoy it, there will be no independence left for anybody.’ Tocqueville took for granted that, in American, many of the requisite habits and beliefs would be taught and transmitted within families – chiefly by women, who were the main teachers of children and the ‘keepers of orderly peaceful homes.’ (1993, p. 2)

As Glendon points out, the historic place for imparting and developing democratic civic virtues within this country was the family home, and women were chiefly responsible for leading this education so imperative to the health of our country. However, times have

changed, and today our society no longer expects women to be the “keepers of orderly peaceful homes.” Nor does our society, any longer, expect women to have the primary responsibility for teaching children and transmitting our cultural values. Such expectations no longer seem fair, and are often unfeasible, with women working away from their homes and children as much, and often more, than their husbands. Unfortunately, our society has not shifted this responsibility, nor has it developed an expectation that any other individual, institution, or group perform this vital task. Leaving a job as important as the development of democratic civic virtues to chance does not bode well for the health of our democracy. To counteract this trend, democratic citizens must increase their civic-mindedness, increasing their consciousness of the importance of democratic civic virtues for the health of their democracy, they must learn what is required for the successful development of democratic civic virtues, and they must begin to rebuild and support the places that these civic virtues can be taught – once again renewing our expectations that all children raised within our democracy be raised in such a way that democratic civic virtues can take root and thrive.

Being conscious of the effect individual behavior has on other people and the greater community also requires discern and respect for the rights of others. This discernment should then lead to the responsible use of freedoms and respect for the liberties of others. It is important that democratic citizens not only discern the legal and human rights of other people, but also that they act in such a way that they do not infringe upon them. In order to succeed at protecting the rights of others, democratic citizens will

have to develop the ability to postpone gratification, moderate their individual greed, selfishness, and ambition, and be moderate in their own demands. In order to respect the rights of others, and to live and work well with them, you must often moderate your own behavior and desires. Rational self-direction, deliberative self-guidance, self-control, and personal responsibility, will also aid in being conscious of the effect individual actions have on others and in helping moderate and control behavior appropriately.

Abiding by the laws is another important virtue democratic citizens need to develop in order to have a complete awareness of the effect their own behavior and activity have on the community. Without the rule of law, the stability and health of a pluralistic liberal democracy would quickly become tenuous. Both by creating order and maintaining efficiency, as well as through protecting the rights and wellbeing of citizens, laws play an important regulatory function in democracy and should be respected and followed by members of the community¹⁸.

Open-mindedness is another important democratic civic virtue helpful for remaining conscious of the effect each individual has on other members of the community. Being open-minded does not entail remaining neutral concerning other peoples' opinions and decisions, but it does mean giving the benefit of the doubt to others when you do not know what is like to be in their shoes. It means being open to potentially changing your mind, your judgments, and your beliefs. This kind of openness requires

¹⁸ Although following laws is an important foundation for understanding the effect of one's behavior on others, an assessment of the justness of any law might bring you to decide that it is potentially more beneficial to society for you to consciously break the law than it is for you to blindly follow it. A good example of citizens who have demonstrated this approach, while exhibiting a clear understanding of the effect of their behavior on others, are Rosa Parks and Henry David Thoreau.

curiosity about other people and about beliefs contrary to your own, as well as a continual re-assessment of your own beliefs and experiences. In a democracy, where compromises must be reached and people from many different backgrounds have to live and work together, open-mindedness makes it easier for members of the community to interact, relate, and learn from one another. Being open-minded encourages dialogue and invites others to engage in a constructive process, coming together to find solutions. Without open-mindedness, members of a community can easily offend one another, causing rifts and factions, and discouraging the smooth functioning of democracy.

Consciousness of the connection between individuals and their activities will also be strengthened by a toleration of diversity. A pluralistic liberal democracy thrives when each member of the community not only tolerates, but also celebrates, the diversity and richness found within it. So long as no one's views or choices prevent others from pursuing their conception of the good life, different conceptions of individual excellence and views on how to order the community will lead to a vibrant community in which individual expression, engagement, and pursuits can flourish. The freedom this consciousness and tolerance creates will be precisely for the sake of allowing each individual to pursue the life that seems best to him or her – even if this varies from that of his or her neighbor.

Finally, the last example of democratic civic virtue is the disposition to narrow the gap between principles and practice in one's own life as well as in society at large. Democratic citizens who are aware of the interconnection of each individual and his

endeavors should strive to create the changes he wants to see in the physical and political environment surrounding him. It is essential to the health of a democracy that its members understand that both what they create, and what they fail to create, have significant consequences for the state of their community, the wellbeing of others, and themselves; and consequently, that they strive to have the best effect they can.

Ultimately, all of the democratic civic virtues discussed above require citizens who are awake, aware, participatory, and engaged. The ideal members of a healthy democracy will develop themselves: express their beliefs, judgments, and needs; work hard to listen to and adequately communicate with other members of the community; participate in conjoint activity and mutual care with and for other members of the community; and be conscious of the interconnection between individuals within a community and the health of the community as a whole.

Additionally, Chart 3 shows that these examples of democratic civic virtues can be in tension with one another, and, likewise, can contribute to the emergence of a creative dynamic, if they are developed in a balanced way within each individual. As we saw in Chapter 1, tension can exist between the democratic civic virtues upon which individual dispositions depend and those upon which communal dispositions depends. For example, freedom and self-direction, both necessary for individual expression, can come into conflict with respect for the rights of others, compassion, or cooperation. Likewise, persisting with one's own ideas or agenda can come into conflict with the need for adaptability. At times reason-giving and even engagement can be in conflict with

actions required to uphold civility. Although there are tensions that exist between many of these democratic civic virtues, these tensions do not necessitate negative consequences. If individual citizens are well-balanced by developing both individual and community-building virtues, then this tension can become creative and freeing – allowing citizens to utilize whichever skills and virtues work best in each situation, often balancing the need for two competing ways of being. Likewise, as discussed in Chapter 1, a democracy that is made up of well-balanced citizens whose civic virtues contribute to a creative dynamic, can itself become a fulcrum point, encouraging and protecting both individual development and rights and those that are necessary for forming and sustaining strong community and the common good. By harnessing this tension that naturally exists within man – between his individual needs and wants and his desire for and need to live within community – democracies can become societies that support, nurture, and protect true and lasting individual and political freedom. In the following chapters, I use these forty democratic civic virtues as examples to demonstrate – through empirical research – that the aesthetics of school environments have the ability to contribute to their development.

DEMOCRATIC CIVIC VIRTUE: CONTEXT SENSITIVE BUT NOT RELATIVISTIC

The above section contains a lengthy list of examples of civic virtues important for democracy, as well as explanations of why they are important. However, it is not important that everyone agree to the same list of democratic civic virtues. So long as the

members of democratic communities believe in democracy, see the importance of democratic civic virtues, want to develop meaningful lives, have respect for children, and recognize the importance of their development and cultivation as democratic citizens, it does not matter that every citizen, or every community within a democratic society, agrees on, or works toward fostering the exact same virtues. This does not mean that all virtues and characteristics are equal, nor should it encourage a kind of relativism that leads citizens to shy away from disagreement, tough conversations, and engaged opinions, which can lead to unconscious, meaningless lives, schools, and policies. Rather, urging that not everyone must agree on the same list of democratic civic virtues is meant to foster a society where impassioned individuals take civic virtue seriously and each carefully consider for themselves and their own immediate communities which virtues need to be fostered in order to achieve and sustain a healthy democracy.

In *Citizenship Education and the Modern State*, Kerry Kennedy (1997) clarifies this middle position I am aiming to achieve in my discussion of democratic civic virtues:

The search for middle ground between absolutism and relativism in moral education is part of a broader project of contemporary moral and political theory - a project forging new ground that I refer to as *situated morality*. ... This position rejects the moral universality of Kant's Categorical Imperative in favor of a more contingent, located, indeterminate set of answers arrived at through processes of reasoned deliberation. This argument is "relativistic" not in the sense that it claims that everything is simply a matter of opinion, but because morality is relative to context. Ultimately, this approach blurs boundaries and emphasizes connections between moral principles, ethical values, and political ideal. Situated morality resides in the middle ground, the messy ground, where human life is lived; ground that Standish refers to as an "intermediate level" of "communal space" (*TRW*, 52-53). In this space, morality is relative not in the sense that anything goes, but rather in the sense that it is socially constructed... This situated, or socially constructed, view of moral value makes moral life appear at once very much

vibrant and alive, yet exceedingly complicated. There are no absolute answers to be found, yet the point is engaging in the process of trying. This is at heart an optimistic vision that wants to hold onto the possibility of morality, while simultaneously rejecting any one vision of morality. (pp. 409-410)

It is not that civic virtues are only a matter of relativistic opinion; rather, democratic civic virtues are a matter of context, dependant on the specifics of each community and its citizens. As discussed in Chapter 1, democracy requires a continual effort to solve emergent problems and which solution is appropriate at any given point is dependent on the details of the society and the particular situation. Similarly, the civic virtues necessary for democracy's health and sustainability are also context sensitive and subject to change, disagreement, and fluctuation.

Simply put, belief in the importance of and the need for democratic civic virtues will lead individuals and communities to foster environments in which democratic civic virtues, important for their particular community and citizens, are developed. The differences in belief as to which democratic civic virtues should be fostered will lead to a variety of communities that foster civic virtue in different ways. The precise meaning that is made within these communities, the structures of the educational programs, the aesthetics of the environments in which these virtues are cultivated, among many other details, will vary from school to school and from community to community. Not only is this variation acceptable, it is desirable, and a testament to the rich, vibrant, participatory society a healthy democracy can be when its citizens maintain it through active determination without external mandate or direction.

This is the heart of the matter. Civil society turns children into good citizens. Government alone, no matter how well constituted, cannot achieve this goal. The incentives of a free-market economy, as valuable as they are, cannot achieve this goal. Only the family and the other associations of civil society can turn children into good citizens... [T]hese institutions are our seedbeds of civic virtue – the foundational sources of competence, character, and citizenship in free societies. For this reason, Don E. Eberly calls the mediating structure of civil society ‘the most important structures for a free people to maintain.’ (Blankenhorn, n.d. p. 275)

Chapter 3 will discuss further the differences of opinion that have historically, and still contemporarily, exist in approaches to and beliefs about civic education.

HABITUATION: NECESSARY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC CIVIC VIRTUE

Dewey explains that democratic civic virtues do not necessarily develop on their own, but rather must be developed through practice and habituation. Savage (2002) explains,

Dewey does not assume that individuals already possess the virtues of autonomy. Instead, he argues that the virtues necessary to exercise the moral and intellectual powers, like all virtues, are the product of education. If individuals do not learn to reflect critically on their existing cultural values or to exercise their creative individuality within that cultural context, then these virtues will never just magically appear. If we want individuals to have the moral and intellectual virtues and the healthy liberal civil society within which to exercise them, then these things must be promoted by a liberal culture. (p. 136)

As Dewey reflects, education is required to ensure the proper development of essential democratic civic virtues, for without such conscious methods aiming at their development, citizens are unlikely to possess the foundation of virtues necessary for democracy.

Speaking generally about virtue, Alasdair MacIntyre (1988) explains that “unless we practice them irrespective of whether in any particular set of contingent circumstances they will produce those goods [at which they aim] or not, we cannot possess them at all. We cannot be genuinely courageous or truthful and be so only on occasion” (p. 198). And Savage adds to this statement that “neither...can we be genuinely reflective and creative only on occasion” (Savage, 2002, p. 26). Without concerted effort and routine practice civically virtuous characteristics are unlikely to develop into consistent traits that define behavior. Many other theorists also agree with this perspective, as MacMullen explains:

Bill Galston (1991, p. 245) approvingly quotes a 1987 statement from the American Federation of Teachers: “Devotion to human dignity and freedom, to equal rights, to social and economic justice, to the rule of law, to civility and truth, to tolerance of diversity, to mutual assistance, to personal and civic responsibility, to self-restraint and self-respect – all these must be taught and learned.” And other theorists fall over themselves to agree that civic education – of one kind or another – is indispensable for the requisite formation of character. Callan (1997, p. 3) declares that “the vitality of the political order depends on an education that is dedicated to specific ideals of character.” Richard Dagger (1997, p. 120) notes that, “Like the other virtues, civic virtue is a character trait or disposition that is not likely to thrive without encouragement and cultivation.” Meira Levinson (1999, p. 102) cautions: “we cannot trust that children will ‘naturally’ develop appropriate characters and commitments without being specifically educated in the liberal civic virtues.” And Stephen Macedo (2000, pp., 20-21) is especially concerned about the dangers of complacency. “There is no reason to think that the dispositions that characterize good liberal citizens come about naturally: good citizens are not simply born that way, they must be educated by schools and a variety of other social and political institutions” (Macedo, 2000, p. 16). In particular, he adds, we must not make “the libertarian mistake of assuming that liberal citizens – self-restrained, moderate, and reasonable – spring full-blown from the soil of private freedom” (Macedo, 2000, pp. 20-21). Finally, and most recently, Peter Levine (2007, p. xiv, emphasis added) nicely captures both the democratic and the liberal imperatives for character-forming civic education. “Citizens are made, not born: it takes deliberate efforts to prepare young people to participate effectively and wisely in

public life. Good government requires widespread civic *participation* and *virtue*." (MacMullen, 2013, pp. 6-7)

In addition to needing to be consciously developed, Dewey and others suggest that they must be actively habituated within students as well.

Dewey argues that intellectual virtues are as much a product of habituation as are moral virtues. We cultivate all of our capacities by practicing them; we are not taught them prior to practicing them except in the sense of becoming cognitively aware of their value. There is as big a difference between cognitively affirming the value of individuality and practicing it as there is between cognitively affirming the value of courage and practicing it. (Savage, 2002, p. 37)

Simply learning or being instructed that these virtues exist and are essential for democracy will do little to help citizens learn to live by them. In order for virtues to define citizen behavior children must routinely be given continual opportunities to practice and live the ideals and virtues necessary for democracy. The NCSS Position Statement (1997) recognizes this need when it says:

Character formation is a complex process. An essential, and often neglected, dynamic of character formation is the provision of opportunities for students to observe and practice good character and civic virtues. In other words, homes, schools and communities must be places where adults model good character and children have the opportunity to live out the ideals of character and citizenship. Civic virtue must be lived, not just studied. (p. 24)

Consequently, civic education programs should provide ample opportunities for students to cultivate the habits of democratic civic virtue.

CONCLUSION

In this Chapter I show that both Dewey and many other theorists believe that democratic civic virtues are essential for democracy. On this view, civic virtues are more essential than institutional structures for the health and maintenance of democracy, because most often institutions are the consequence rather than the cause of civic virtues themselves. I give examples of forty civic virtues that help to provide a foundation on which each of Dewey's characteristics can form and subsist. I discuss each virtue and its contribution to Dewey's characteristics and to democracy more generally, as well as showing how each virtue can each be categorized based on which of the four criteria it supports and on which side of the tension between individual and communal dispositions it falls. Chart 3 displays this categorization and indicates that a balanced development of these civic virtues within citizens would contribute to the development of a creative dynamic necessary for individual and political freedom.

Dewey, as well as many others, recognizes that these democratic civic virtues cannot be trusted to form on their own and must be cultivated through practice and habituation. These civic virtues require both the means and the practice to become real parts of people's lives. If children are raised simply to repeat what they are told, to associate only with specific demographics of the community, and to sit back and watch as others contribute to and run the community, they will not have the skills or inclinations necessary to form judgments, freely associate, and participate in their community when they become adults. However, if they are educated to observe, care for, and contribute to

their environment, to express their individual views and communicate their experiences, and to appreciate the contributions and expressions of others, they will be well on their way to becoming engaged democratic citizens. It will become clear that aesthetic engagement can both contribute to the development of the individual examples of democratic civic virtues given in this chapter as well as to their development in a balanced way, contributing to the emergence of the creative dynamic so essential to democracy.

In the next chapter I show that the conscious development of democratic civic virtues has historically been seen as an important role of public schools in America. In this chapter I discuss the history of civic and character education in American public schools, the varying ways they have been approached throughout the years, and the disagreements that emerge in the literature concerning these fields.

Chapter 3: American Schools and Citizenship Education

“Many young people today have adequate knowledge of their civic responsibilities, but fail to live out these ideals. It is essential that young people be exposed to attractive models of civic virtue and have the opportunity to practice civic virtue in a meaningful and rewarding manner.”

– National Council for the Social Studies
Position Statement (1997)

Chapter 1 defines democracy and describes Dewey’s democratic ideal. Chapter 2 shows that democratic civic virtues are essential for democracy’s health and sustainability. This chapter continues by showing that schools have a critical role to play in the development of these essential democratic civic virtues and thus in the health of democracy. In this chapter, I confirm that civic education, or education necessary to prepare students to be responsible citizens, has always been, and is likely to continue to be, seen as a top priority for American public schools. I then give an account of past historical approaches to citizenship education, during which it becomes apparent that the same tension discussed in Chapter 1 – between individual and communal dispositions – has played a role in determining methods of citizenship education throughout our country’s history. This discussion makes it clear that the theoretical dichotomies discussed in the previous two chapters have real implications for how citizenship education is implemented in practice. In this chapter, I also locate my thesis within the relevant research, explaining the different theoretical and educational strands of thought that have contributed to the citizenship education of American citizens. Lastly, the end of this chapter gives an account of general methods currently considered important for successful civic education.

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: AN IMPORTANT JOB FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

As I show in Chapter 2, Dewey (1916) believes democracy is a way of life that requires the support of education:

The devotion of democracy to education is a familiar fact. The superficial explanation is that a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated. Since a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest; these can be created only by education. But there is a deeper explanation. A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. (7.2)

Consequently, Dewey believes that school should be the “primary practical instrument for transforming and improving society” (Frankel, 1977, p. 10). As Savage explains, Dewey “argued that both liberalism and democracy require a particular type of person – one who has cultivated the moral and intellectual virtues – and thus the best place to begin creating a liberal democratic society is in the educational institutions” (Savage, 2002, p. 94). Once again, Dewey is not the only one who argues his point. Many theorists, educators, and public opinion polls agree that, “Schools transmit cultural traditions as surely as families transmit family traditions. Schools have taken on this task, in response to demands of the public, in the past and surely will continue to do so into the future” (Leming, 2001, p. 74).

According to Richard A. Nuccio (2007), Director of Civitas International Programs at the Center for Civic Education, the first public schools were created “based on a vision that all education had civic purposes and that every teacher was a civic teacher” (p. 1). Even though, currently, much of the American citizenry is not informed

on many vital issues, not civically engaged, and has little development of civic virtues, the importance of civic education in schools is still widely recognized: “Over one-fourth of all state constitutions state that a system of public instruction is required because an informed and capable citizenry is vital to the preservation of a free and democratic government” (Tolo, 1999). In addition, the Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll has consistently found that “to prepare students to be responsible citizens” is considered a “very important” goal of public education by a majority of citizens¹⁹, regardless of whether they have children in public schools (Branson & Quigley, 1998). Judge Learned Hand, in a speech made in New York in 1944, captured the centrality of civic dispositions in his now famous words: “Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it. While it lies there, it needs no constitution, no law, no court to save it.”

Because, in an ideal democracy, the people are both the beginning and the end of the government, the dispositions and characteristics of the people will play a significant role in defining the state and in determining whether it can successfully safeguard and promote the inalienable rights such a government is created to defend. As a result, public schools, and the teachers within them, have an essential role to play in the health and sustainability of democracy (NCSS Position Statement, 1997, pp. 23-4), and “*every*

¹⁹ It should be duly noted that although civic education is considered a very important goal of education by a majority of citizens, this does not mean that there is uniform opinion on what civic virtue means or how it should be carried out in schools.

lesson in a public school can be a lesson in civic virtue and moral responsibility²⁰. A central mission of public schools has always been and must always be to instill the habits of the mind and heart necessary for good citizenship and strong moral character” (Haynes, 1996, p. 17).

It is for these reasons that my thesis focuses on how to improve civic education with American public schools. For,

How best to teach moral and civic character to youth is an issue that all responsible educators should accord a high priority in their deliberations about the goals of education in a democratic and pluralistic nation. While we may not always agree about how and what to teach, and the nature of the solutions to these problems will vary from community to community, the times we live in make addressing these questions imperative. (Leming, 2001, p. 75)

“The times we live in,” that make addressing these questions imperative, will be shown, in Chapter 4, to be times when civic virtue and social capital are in steep decline and compromising the health of our democracy.

HISTORICAL APPROACHES TO CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Historically there have been, and there continue to be, debates and disagreement over how and what values, virtues, and characteristics should be taught in public schools,

²⁰ One may balk at such a claim as merely platitudinous, objecting that classes such as math and P.E. certainly cannot be lessons in civic virtue. However, I argue that even such classes as math can have an effect on the virtues and behaviors modeled for, encouraged, and developed in students. While math class will not instill civic knowledge or direct civic skills – such as how to write a letter to your congressman – the environment of the classroom, the types of activities students are given to complete, and the way students interact with one another can all contribute – either positively or negatively – to the development of civic virtues in students such as respect, persistence, critical mindedness, rational self-direction, and self-control.

including some debate over whether schools should even be involved in teaching civic virtue. But despite these difficulties and disagreements, as Leming (2001) says – succinctly paraphrasing the argument above – it would be tantamount to cultural suicide not to have school involvement in the development of healthy democratic citizens:

It would seem almost unthinkable that a nation would not wish for its schools to transmit certain cultural values to children, for to not do so would surely be a form of cultural suicide, but in the United States there is considerable debate over such questions as what values should be taught, how they should be taught, and in some cases even if the school should be involved at all. (p. 62)

In order to achieve guidelines for creating successful civic education programs today and in the future, it is helpful to understand the disagreements and threads of pedagogy in citizenship education that have occurred throughout diverse periods of American history. These periods have employed different programs, all aiming at the development of civic virtues, which have variously been defined or subsumed under the headings of values education, moral education, character education, and civic education. While there are significant differences in meaning between these terms, their usage has overlapped and changed over time, making their precise meanings and boundaries difficult to define²¹. Within the following historical account, citizenship education will be referred to using most of these terms, depending on the specific era and program being discussed.

²¹ For further discussion of these terms and differences in their meanings see Leming, 2001, p. 63.

The history of civic education within our country can be broken into five periods²². During the first period, prior to 1830, civic education mostly took the form of moral instruction, which was viewed as appropriate within schools in order to assist churches in ensuring that American citizens were educated in, what Thomas Jefferson called, “manners, morals, and habits perfectly homogenous with those of the country.” During this period, which struggled against potential social chaos caused by the Revolutionary War and extensive Western expansion, moral instruction within schools was viewed as a method to “insure social control” (Leming, 2001, p. 65). This period approached the development of civic virtues within students from the perspective of developing communal dispositions, in order to heighten cultural context, homogeny, and stability.

From the 1830s to the turn of the twentieth century, schools were viewed as important vehicles for socializing immigrants into a “common national culture” (Leming, 2001, p. 65). With the goal of ensuring that children developed into diligent workers, responsible citizens, and virtuous men and women, schools aimed to develop within students internalized moral restraints, and a strong sense of obedience and responsibility for authority. This period also contained a significant change for civic education within schools. While in the 1830s most Americans believed that Christianity should play a significant role in all moral/civic education, through the effect of increasing numbers of immigrants in the 1880s and 1890s, along with increasing urbanization, moral education

²² The details of the following historical account come from *Historical and Ideological Perspectives on Teaching Moral and Civic Virtue*, by James S. Leming, 2001.

within schools experienced extensive secularization during this time (McKown, 1935, p. 74). Once again, civic virtues were developed during this period with the aim of strengthening communal dispositions, in the aid of developing contributions to and responsibility for the common good.

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, robust character education programs were put in place. These programs were characterized by their use of codes of conduct, group activities, and school clubs in order to encourage peer influence in the development of good character. The “Children’s Morality Code” was a widely used code of conduct that emphasized “ten laws of right living”: self control, good health, kindness, sportsmanship, self-reliance, duty, reliability, truth, good workmanship, and teamwork (Hutchins, 1917). All aspects of school life aimed at integrating these goals, and student clubs were created in order to provide an opportunity for practicing these virtues. Such programs focused on the development of communal dispositions but with more emphasis than previous programs placed on personal traits – beyond obedience and the recognition of authority – necessary for contributing to the common good. These programs also differed from those in previous periods by focusing more on the development of these virtues through practice and social interaction.

After a decline in academic interest in the character education that characterized the previous era – or at least a decline in the publication of academic papers on the topic (Leming, 2001, p. 67) – and a slow change in the practice of character education during WWII and the beginning of the cold war (McClellan, 1999) – two publications, *Values*

and Teaching, by Louis Rath, Merrill Harmin, and Sidney Simon and "Moral Education in the School," by Lawrence Kohlberg, shifted the interest and focus of moral and civic education in schools to programs based on value clarification and the cognitive-developmental theory of moral reasoning. Although these two theories have many differences, the programs that were based on them both ensured that teachers acted only as facilitators for students examining their own values and developing their own opinions. During this era, authority was viewed with suspicion and values were, ideally, "to be authentic and self-chosen, not imposed" (Leming, 2001, p. 69). This period contained a clear shift, approaching civic education through the development of individual dispositions instead of communal ones. The focus during this era was personal autonomy, critical reasoning, and freedom. There was little room for community building or the involvement of collaboration and practiced socialization.

Today, the value clarification model has been denounced, there is much more credence given to family and community involvement in the development of virtues and values than there was in the previous era, and less focus is placed on the sole judgment of autonomous individuals. However, what remains is difficult to characterize. Some programs are labeled character education, which covers a large array of pedagogy and philosophical concerns all focused on the moral and civic development of children. While other programs are labeled civic education, some focused on civic knowledge, others on improving participation, and yet others concerned with the development of civic virtues.

In the next section – Locating my Thesis within the Literature – I discuss the differences and overlap between Character and Civic education in schools today.

Leming explains that the diverse traditions of political thought that underlie our country – republican and liberal political theories – are partially responsible for the tension and swings that have existed during the history of civic education and that can still be seen between competing theories and approaches today. Republican political theory focuses on the common good, the development of communal dispositions, and the need for communally crafted and shared values, while liberal political theory focuses on the development of individual dispositions and the creation of morally and intellectually autonomous individuals. America’s civic education programs have historically all been based on one side or the other of this dichotomy. Below is Chart 1 with the addition of liberal and republican political theory.

Chart 4: Locating the Creative Dynamic (With Additional Row)

Individual Dispositions	Creative Dynamic	Communal Dispositions
Liberal Political Theory	A Balanced Approach to Citizenship Education	Republican Political Theory
Liberal Democracy	Pragmatism, John Dewey, Deep Democracy	Communitarian Democracy
Individualism	Democratic Citizens	Cultural Context
Freedom	Democratic Citizens	Authority

While historically American civic education has been directed exclusively by one side or the other of this dichotomy, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 and illustrated in

Chart 4, democracy – and successful citizenship education – requires a balanced approach that combines theory and practice from both sides of the tension. This means that successful civic education programs need to have theoretical foundations, such as that held by pragmatism, Dewey, and Deep Democracy – all three of which were defined and explained in Chapter 1 – that sees both parts of the tension as essential. Successful civic education programs also need to practically implement the development of both individual and communal impulses, allowing for the establishment of creative dynamics within citizens and a fulcrum point within the greater democratic society as a whole. As I explain in Chapters 7 through 10, this is precisely what the creation and maintenance of aesthetically beautiful and artistic school environments can provide: a balanced development of democratic civic virtues.

LOCATING MY THESIS WITHIN THE LITERATURE

The current understanding of citizenship, within political science and education literature, largely coincides with Dewey’s understanding:

This conception [of citizenship] is consistent with Dewey’s view that democracy is not only a form of government (which would require educated voters) but also a mode of living together (which requires citizens prepared to solve differences in mutual deliberation in a respectful way and to engage responsibly in the common interest). (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006, pp. 500-501)

It is also largely agreed upon that “a competent, engaged and effective citizenship – necessary for full political, economic, social, and cultural participation” requires education in the following competencies (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006, p. 503):

(a) Civic and political knowledge (such as concepts of democracy, understanding the structure and mechanics of political decision-making and legislation, citizens' rights and duties, current political issues and problems).

(b) Intellectual skills (e.g. the ability to understand, analyze and check the reliability of information about government and public policy issues).

(c) Social and participatory skills (e.g. the ability to reason, argue and express own views in political discussions; conflict solution skills; knowing how to influence policies and decisions by petitioning and lobbying, build coalitions and co-operate with partner organizations).

(d) Certain values, attitudes and 'dispositions' with a motivational power (e.g. interest in social and political affairs, a sense of responsibility, tolerance and recognition of own prejudices; appreciation of values on which democratic societies are founded like democracy, social justice and human rights)²³. (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006, p. 503)

The importance of these competencies for effective citizenship is widely agreed upon, and it has almost achieved the status of common-sense to recognize the "commensurate importance and interconnectedness of civic knowledge, skills, and

²³ For an elaborate account of these strands of competent citizenship, see Torney-Purta & Lopez, 2006 and Patrick & Vontz, 2001.

dispositions in citizenship education.” This agreement can be found within scholarly writings and position statements of widely recognized institutions and associations involved in the improvement of civic education (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006, p. 503). For example, position statements confirming this view were issued by:

- The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools (Carnegie Corporation and CIRCLE, 2003).
- The Center for Civic Education in its Campaign to Promote Civic Education (Center for Civic Education, 2006).
- The Education Commission of the States and its National Center for Learning and Citizenship, in their initiative Every Student a Citizen (Compact for Learning and Citizenship & National Study Group on Citizenship in K-12 Schools, 2000, 2001; Miller, 2004).
- The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2001) in a position statement Creating Effective Citizens.
- The National Alliance for Civic Education (NACE) in an authorized statement on The Importance of Civic Education (Wichowsky & Levine, n.d.).

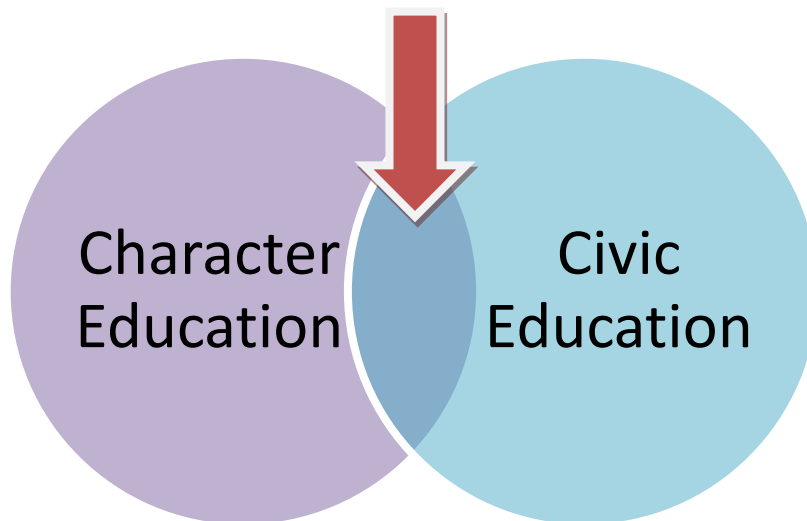
However, within the literature, there is disagreement over precisely what should be considered civic education and what should be considered character education, as well as disagreements concerning where and how moral education and social studies education should fit into these demarcations. While civic education contains components and programs for developing knowledge, skills, and dispositions, toward the end of effective democratic citizenship, character education is often an “umbrella term that describes concerted efforts to teach a number of qualities, such as civic virtues, respect and responsibility, social and emotional learning, empathy and caring, tolerance for diversity, and service to the community.” Likewise, “The boundaries of character

education are imprecise. These goals overlap with those of other efforts, such as civic education programs and service-learning programs” (Schwartz, Beatty, & Dachnowicz, 2006, pp. 26-7).

Even though conflict and disagreement exists within the literature over the correct definitions and boundaries of civic and character education, within practice there is a portion of civic education that clearly overlaps with character education, and this overlap involves the development of social skills and democratic dispositions. This place of overlap within schools, shown in Chart 5, is the focus of my thesis and where my contributions are aimed.

Chart 5: The Development of Democratic Civic Virtue

Development of Democratic Civic Virtue



Developing civic virtues involves both civic education and character education because developing virtues necessarily involves developing character and developing virtues

beneficial for democracy, i.e., democratic civic virtues, which also necessarily involves civic education or education toward citizenship.

My thesis aims to contribute to the improvement of civic education, however, since it discusses only ways to improve the development of social skills, participatory skills, and democratic civic virtues, it provides suggestions for improving only part of civic education. A complete civic education, aimed at the development of contributing, healthy, and successful citizens, also requires the development of political skills and knowledge, in addition to civic virtues. Hence, my thesis addresses the improvement of only part of a successful civic education.

METHODS FOR SUCCESSFUL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

This chapter illustrates that schools have an important role to play in the development of democratic civic virtues within citizens. Today, those working toward the improvement of school citizenship education recognize that opportunities for practicing and implementing civic virtues within schools are imperative to the success of these programs and the development of consistent civic behaviors and habits. The National Council for the Social Studies explains, within their 1997 positions statement, that:

Education that provides students with a rich knowledge and understanding of their responsibilities as citizens in a democracy must be accompanied by opportunities for students to develop the disposition to act virtuously in their private and public lives. Many young people today have adequate knowledge of their civic responsibilities, but fail to live out these ideals. It is essential that young people be exposed to attractive models of civic virtue and have the opportunity to practice

civic virtue in a meaningful and rewarding manner. Schools need to recognize the different learning processes shaping the civic 'habits of the heart.'(p. 240)
Even the NCSS stresses that schools and educators must aim to develop civic virtues throughout the school day and not only within isolated civics or social studies classes. Civic virtues are developed overtime through practicing civic virtues and living in a civically virtuous manner. The NCSS suggests that successful development of democratic civic virtues requires the support of consciously constructed and maintained school environments and cultures where students are routinely given the opportunity to practically apply these virtues:

The task of fostering civic virtue is not the exclusive province of social studies education, even though it falls most directly on social studies professionals. One precondition is a school environment consistent with the principles and core values of the ideal of civic virtue. To the extent possible, students' lives in schools should be based on fundamental democratic values and the practical application of democratic principles. Careful attention to the school culture is critical if schools are to foster moral and civic virtue. The hidden curriculum of the school has the potential to teach important lessons about authority, responsibility, caring, and respect. The principles and values underpinning the day-to-day operations of the school should be consistent with the values taught to young people." (NCSS Position Statement, 1997, p. 24)

While the NCSS recognizes that the environments, cultures, and day-to-day operations of schools should be consistent with the democratic civic virtues trying to be developed, they do not recognize the powerful role school environments – and their creation and maintenance – can play in the development of these virtues. Additionally, while the position statement pronounces that “[s]tudents should be encouraged and given the opportunity to make positive contributions to the well-being of fellow students and to the school” (p. 24), it does not provide concrete suggestions for how this should be done,

nor does it recognize how great an opportunity for positive contributions the care and maintenance of the school environment can provide.

In *The Role of Civic Education*, Branson and Quigley do provide some concrete suggestions for developing democratic civic virtues within schools. They are listed below:

- Civility, courage, self-discipline, persistence, concern for the common good, respect for others, and other traits relevant to citizenship can be promoted through cooperative learning activities and in class meetings, student councils, simulate public hearings, mock trials, mock elections, and student courts.
- Self-discipline, respect for others, civility, punctuality, personal responsibility, and other character traits can be fostered in school and community service learning projects, such as tutoring younger students, caring for the school environment, and participating in voter registration drives.
- Recognition of shared values and a sense of community can be encouraged through celebration of national and state holidays, and celebration of the achievements of classmates and local citizens.
- Attentiveness to public affairs can be encouraged by regular discussions of significant current events.

- Reflection on ethical considerations can occur when students are asked to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues that involve ethical considerations, that is, issues concerning good and bad, rights and wrong.
- Civic mindedness can be increased if schools work with civic organizations, bring community leaders into the classroom to discuss issues with students, and provide opportunities for students to observe and/or participate in civic organizations.

These suggestions offer further concrete guidelines for the development of successful citizenship education within schools. These suggestions can be distilled into the following general suggestions:

- Include cooperative learning activities – opportunities for students to work together and ideally to tackle relevant community problems.
- Provide community service learning – opportunities for students to participate in and contribute to the community.
- Encourage communal celebrations and community recognition of achievements.
- Supply opportunities for students to evaluate possible solutions – talking with others over different judgments and perspectives.
- Involve students in the wider community.

In Chapters 7 through 10, I demonstrate that engaging students in the continual creation and maintenance of school aesthetics, which are beautiful and artistic, has the ability to meet these guidelines – along with those identified in Chapters 1 and 2 – for the successful development of democratic civic virtues. I also provide detailed suggestions for how the aesthetics of school environments can be specifically utilized to achieve this goal. The chapters containing these details and suggestions demonstrate the advantages and benefits of employing such a method through the examination of empirical studies and research.

CONCLUSION

American schools have always been, are currently, and will likely continue to be seen as playing an essential role in the education of healthy, successful, knowledgeable, participatory, and fully-developed democratic citizens, making the determination of how to successfully provide citizenship education within schools an important endeavor. Throughout history, civic education in American public schools has gone by many different names and has overlapped with various other disciplines, such as moral education, character education, and service learning. These varying approaches to the education of citizens can be partially explained by the tension between liberal and republican political thought and their roots within our country – which can be characterized, along with the other false dichotomies discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, as exhibiting a tension between individual and communal dispositions. This theoretical

tension has influenced the practical implementation of civic education programs throughout American history.

Citizenship education programs in different eras of American history have favored the development of either individual dispositions or communal dispositions, and the tension between the two can still be seen in current civic education programs and attempts at the improvement of these programs, today. There exists conflict and overlap within both the literature and practice. My thesis aims to make a contribution where character and civic educations overlap – focusing on and advocating for the balanced development of virtues that fall within the purview of both individual and communal dispositions, for the benefit of civic engagement and democratic health.

Throughout Chapters 1, 2, and 3, I have extracted general guidelines for the development of successful civic education programs within schools. In Chapters 7 through 10, I demonstrate that the aesthetics of school environments are able to meet these guidelines for creating successful civic education programs. While some advocates for improved development of civic virtues within schools recognize that school environments, hidden curriculums, and student practice and participation are essential for this development, there are few concrete and detailed suggestions for specifically how these virtues can be developed. In Chapters 7 through 10, I also provide specific examples of how school environments can be utilized for the development of these virtues as well as ample evidence, in the form of empirical research, of the success such an approach is likely to have.

Chapter 4: Evidence that Civic Education Needs Improvement

“The need to revitalize and re-imagine civic education is urgent. But that urgent need brings a great opportunity – the chance to improve civic education in ways that will resonate for years.”

– U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan (2011).

Up to this point I have discussed the theoretical underpinnings of my thesis: Dewey’s theory of ideal democracy, the importance of civic virtues, the history of civic education, and the important role schools can play in developing democratic civic virtues. As of yet, I have not demonstrated that America currently needs to be concerned with the development of democratic civic virtues or the improvement of civic education programs within its schools, nor have I provided any empirical evidence that improving school environments could actually be an effective way to achieve this civic improvement. In this chapter, I provide this evidence in the three sections listed below:

- Empirical Evidence that American Democracy Needs to Revitalize Democratic Civic Virtues:

This section contains empirical evidence that democratic civic virtues have been and are currently in decline, in American, and that this decline should be stopped for the health and long-term sustainability of our democracy.

- Empirical Evidence that schools can Play an Important Role in the Development of Democratic Civic Virtues:

This section provides evidence for two important empirical reasons that public schools can play an important role in the development of democratic civic virtues. The first is that

social habituation occurs within schools, whether this habitation is intentional and carefully guided or whether it is produced by accident and unknowingly created. The second is that schools can be high-stress environments, which have been shown to produce negative social behaviors and development. By consciously recognizing and creating the environments in American schools, these spaces can be formed to develop positive civic behaviors and virtues and to mitigate harmful social effects. This section also discusses current problems with civic education programs and gaps in the literature on civic education reform.

- Empirical and Theoretical Evidence that the Aesthetics of Environments have Strong Behavioral and Developmental Effects:

This section the Broken Window Theory, which posits that environments have strong consequences on social behavior and that they contribute to the development of habitual patterns of conduct.

EVIDENCE THAT AMERICAN DEMOCRACY NEEDS TO REVITALIZE DEMOCRATIC CIVIC VIRTUES

In *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Robert Putnam (2000) measures and analyzes, what he calls, social capital in America. “[S]ocial capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (p. 19). Many of the examples of civic virtues given in Chapter 2 – such as participation, engagement, trust, and

cooperation – fall within Putnam’s conception of social capital, and unfortunately, Putnam’s measurements show that these civic virtues have diminished greatly in America:

For the first two-thirds of the twentieth century a powerful tide bore Americans into ever deeper engagement in the life of their communities, but a few decades ago – silently, without warning – that tide reversed and we were overtaken by a treacherous rip current. Without at first noticing, we have been pulled apart from one another and from our communities over the last third of the century. (2000, p. 27)

This “treacherous rip current” demonstrates the pervasive decline of civic virtue in America today, and highlights the need for revitalizing America’s education so that it can successfully develop civic virtue in tomorrow’s citizens²⁴.

Putnam’s research demonstrates that there has been a significant decrease in all four characteristics identified by Dewey as essential to democracy: Americans are reducing their individual expression, communicated experience, associated living, and consciousness of the connection between individual activities and behavior. According to Putnam, from 1960 to 1996, participation in presidential elections declined by almost a quarter, dropping from 62.8 percent of voting-age Americans who went to the polls in 1960 to 48.9 percent in 1996. Participation in off-year and local elections followed a similar decline (2000, p. 31-2). As Putnam notes, such a significant drop in electoral participation is a problem, not only because of the lack of participation in electing our

²⁴ The demonstrated need for revitalizing American education is my conclusion and not necessarily that of Putnam. While Putnam sees schools as having a role to play in re-building social capital they are not his only, nor his primary, focus. However, my focus on schools and education are also in no way contrary to Putnam’s approach.

representatives, but also because voting is “the most visible symptom of a broader disengagement from community life” (2000, p.35).

Voting is by a substantial margin the most common form of political activity, and it embodies the most fundamental democratic principle of equality. Not to vote is to withdraw from the political community. Moreover, like the canary in the mining pit, voting is an instructive proxy measure of broader social change. Compared to demographically matched nonvoters, voters are more likely to be interested in politics, to give to charity, to volunteer, to serve on juries, to attend community school board meeting, to participate in public demonstration, and to cooperate with their fellow citizens on community affairs. ... So it is hardly a small matter for American democracy when voting rates decline by 25 percent or more. (2000, p. 35)

The drop in voting rates indicates the drastic shift that has taken place within America: citizens are disengaging from all forms of political and social activity.

“[Democratic] citizenship is not a spectator sport” (Putnam, 2000, p. 341), so when citizens disengage – stop doing and start watching – democracy is in trouble.

Barely two decades ago election campaigns were for millions of Americans an occasion for active participation in national deliberation. Campaigning was something we *did*, not something we merely *witnessed*. Now for most Americans, an election campaign is something that happens around us, a grating element in the background noise of everyday life, a fleeting image on a TV screen. Strikingly, the dropout rate from these campaign activities (about 50 percent) is even greater than the dropout rate in the voting booth itself (25 percent). (Putnam, 2000, p. 41, emphasis added)

Not only have Americans’ campaign activities significantly declined but “the frequency of virtually every form of community involvement” has drop from the 60s through the 90s (Putnam, 2000, p. 41). Americans participate less in politics and express their opinions publicly far less than they used to. Signing petitions, writing Congress, writing an article or a letter to the editor, and making a speech are all activities that have

decreased. In other words, both individual expression and communicated experience have declined. This decrease shows that Americans are keeping their opinions and beliefs to themselves more and more often, which stunts public discourse, prevents the open flow of information, and ultimately weakens the very foundation upon which democracy is built.

Not only has participation within the electorate and public expression declined, but the number of people assuming and seeking leadership roles politically, and within the community in other ways, has begun to dwindle as well. For example, from 1973 to 1994, the number of people who ran for public office at any level – from school board to town council – shrank by as much as 15 percent (Putnam, 2000, p. 42), and “the number of men and women who took *any* leadership role in *any* local organization – from ‘old-fashioned’ fraternal organizations to new age encounter groups – was sliced by more than 50 percent” (Putnam, 2000, p. 60). This means that, “American’s lost more than a quarter million candidates annually to choose among” (Putnam, 2000, p. 42).

This decline is a cyclical process, as citizens disengage, the number of voices, and hence perspectives, as well as the number of choices available to citizens diminish; this diminution, in turn, further discourages participation because the remaining public and political discourse is shallow and the available choices disappointing. Fortunately, the reverse is also true, as more members of a community engage, the richer the discourse becomes, because more perspectives, needs, and beliefs are expressed. This enlivened discourse fuels excitement and encourages more members of the community to play a

role by seeking leadership, which in turn, leads to more choices and encourages greater participation. Hence, even a small increase in civic virtue – which contributes to increased willingness of citizens to engage in politics, participate in their communities, and communicate their experiences – can quickly start to rebuild the essential elements of democratic citizenship. As I show in Chapters 7 through 10, by shifting our consciousness to the importance of school aesthetics, schools can become a catalyst for this change.

Beyond the general decrease in individual engagement, participation, and communication, there has been an even greater drop in activities that involve cooperation and require citizens to come together.

[T]he more that my activities depend on the actions of others, the greater the drop-off in my participation. ...In other words, it is precisely those forms of civic engagement...that brought citizens *together*, those activities that most clearly embody social capital – that have declined most rapidly. (Putnam, 2000, p. 45)

As Dewey recognized, associated living is about more than mere political participation. Associated living, which is well-measured by this aspect of social capital, is created when members of a community build relationships with one another and interact in meaningful, sustaining ways, through activities such as participation in an organization, social interactions with neighbors and friends, and church attendance. Unfortunately, associated living has eroded even faster than individual expression and communication.

One activity that contributes to associated living is participation in clubs and organizations. Putnam shows that while “in the mid-1970s nearly two-thirds of all Americans attended club meetings ...by the late 1990s nearly two-thirds of all Americans

never [did]” (p. 61). In addition to this decrease in the number of Americans who attended club and other organizational meetings,

[f]or the vast majority of ‘new organization’s’ members, the only act of membership consists in writing a check for dues or perhaps occasionally reading a newsletter. Few ever attend any meeting of such organizations – many never have meetings at all – and most members are unlikely ever knowingly to encounter any other member. ... Their ties are to common symbols, common leaders, and perhaps common ideals, but *not* to each other. (Putnam, 2000, p. 52)

In short, clubs and organizations no longer play the role they once did in bringing members of the community together to work for shared goals and recreate in shared activity.

A stark decrease in Americans’ participation in church and church activities adds further evidence of this recent drop in community-building associations. Americans have also become less likely to know their neighbors, to socialize with friends, to sit down with their family for conversation and meals. The decrease in all of these activities means that Americans are building less meaningful, lasting, and uniting relationships than they once did. Americans are increasingly isolated in their everyday lives because “we spend more time watching...and less time doing” (Putnam, 2000, p. 115).

And the more we watch the less we want to do. The data confirms, “honesty, civic engagement, and social trust are mutually reinforcing” (Putnam, 2000, p. 137). The less we interact with each other the less honest we become. Social trust disappears because we no longer make the connections necessary for trust to grow. The less connected we become the less reason we have to want to be connected.

In short, people who trust others are *all-round good citizens*, and those more engaged in community life are both more trusting and more trustworthy. Conversely, the civically disengaged believe themselves to be surrounded by miscreants and feel less constrained to be honest themselves. The causal arrows among civic involvement, reciprocity, honesty, and social trust are as tangled as well-tossed spaghetti. (Putnam, 2000, p. 137, emphasis added)

Because associated living and personal engagement are interrelated, it is hard for one to exist without the other. In order for members of a community to form and maintain lasting relationships they must be willing to engage with each other and participate in activities that bring them together. Likewise, the more opportunities for association there are, the easier it is for individuals to participate, become engaged, and contribute to a community. This means that for “all-round good citizens” to exist, members of a community must learn to create and maintain both personal engagement and opportunities for association, and they must become conscious of the importance of these activities for the health and success of democracy.

American schools are not doing enough to counteract this decline. Nearly every analysis reveals that the drop in social capital comes as America’s older generations are replaced. For the most part, it is not the case that citizens who were once politically and socially engaged have slowly become less so. Rather, the drop in political and social engagement has been created by the death of older members and the replacement of these members by citizens who exhibit far less civic virtue than their parents and grandparents. One of the ways to prevent a future characterized by American citizens who do not engage in their communities, who do not participate in politics, and who do not express

their opinions or communicate with their fellow citizens, is to ensure that the development of civic virtue becomes an essential component of American education²⁵.

Putnam's analysis makes it clear that the recent lack of social capital is not a minor problem, but a monumental danger to the health of American democracy:

Year after year, fewer and fewer of us took part in the everyday deliberations that constitute grassroots democracy. In effect, more than a third of American's civic infrastructure simply evaporated between the mid-1970s and the mid-1990s. (Putnam, 2000, p. 43)

America's civic infrastructure is made up of the engagement, communication, and participation of individual citizens, as well as their interconnection and association, and as Putnam shows, these elements of our civic infrastructure are in disarray. So much so, that the NCSS issued an official position statement stating that:

[S]ocial studies teachers have a responsibility and a duty to refocus their classrooms on the teaching of character and civic virtue. They should not be timid or hesitant about working toward these goals. The fate of the American experiment in self-government depends in no small part on the store of civic virtue that resides in the American people. The social studies profession of this nation has a vital role to play in keeping this wellspring of civic virtue flowing. (Hoge, 2002, p. 227)

The importance of improving civic education within our schools is widely recognized²⁶, and as U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2011) remarked: "The need to

²⁵ For further statistics on the decline of civic virtue and social capital in America, see: http://www.gwu.edu/~ccps/pop_civ.html.

²⁶ There are, however, contrary views of democracy that effect the type of suggestions made for improving civic education. An example of differing views can be found in the realist school, which has its roots in the work of Joseph Schumpeter. In contrast to the view expressed above, Schumpeter believes democracy requires a passive citizenry who is involved in politics only – if at all – to vote. Such a view might interpret Putnam's research as indicating that citizens should be involved in as much a-political participation as possible, in order to take away their energy and time from political meddling (Cunningham, 2002, p. 24). Such a view is clearly contrary to that suggested throughout this dissertation.

revitalize and re-imagine civic education is urgent. But that urgent need brings a great opportunity – the chance to improve civic education in ways that will resonate for years.” My thesis aims to contribute such resounding and lasting improvement to our country’s civic education, as well as to turning the tide of declining civic virtue revealed by Putnam.

EVIDENCE THAT SCHOOLS CAN PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC CIVIC VIRTUES

Improvement in civic education requires first the recognition that schools have an essential role to play in the development of democratic civic virtues. As this section shows, the development of civic virtues can be strongly affected by consciously creating environments that encourage, support, and contribute to students developing positive habits based on civic virtues – such as generosity, identifying and respecting the rights of others, and actively and beneficially contributing to one’s environment. The development of civic virtues can also be affected by reducing stressful environmental aspects likely to cause or at least encourage anti-social behavior such as selfishness, ignoring the rights of others, and harming or destroying one’s environment. The next two sub-sections discuss empirical research indicating the importance of habituation in developing character and the effects of stress on both short- and long-term behavior.

These two discussions provide a significant part of the evidence on which my thesis is built as well as providing part of the foundation of the logical argument I make

for the connection between environmental aesthetics and the development of civic character and virtues. My argument throughout the dissertation proceeds generally in the following way²⁷:

- 1) Research shows that the actions, feelings, and thoughts we routinely do or have become habituated, and often unconscious, ways of being²⁸.
- 2) Students spend a majority of their waking hours each day, for many years, in schools²⁹.
- 3) The actions, feelings, and thoughts that students routinely do or have at school are likely to become habituated ways of being, since they are routinely practiced many hours a day for many years of their lives³⁰.
- 4) School environments can affect student behavior, promoting some and deterring other actions, feelings, and thoughts³¹.
- 5) Environmental aesthetics such as beauty, quiet, and nature can promote democratic civic virtues³².
- 6) Environmental aesthetics such as disrepair, loud noise, and artificial lighting can induce stress in students, which is correlated with anti-social and anti-democratic behavior³³.

²⁷ The empirical support for each claim that is not common knowledge will be discussed in proceeding sections and chapters, indicated in their respective footnotes.

²⁸ Evidence provided in the following section on habituation.

²⁹ The average school day is 7+ hours/day and children are required to attend school from age 5 to 16 years old.

³⁰ This step is a logical consequence of points 1 and 2.

³¹ Empirical research presented in Chapter 5 and Chapters 7-10.

³² Empirical research in Chapters 7-10.

- 7) Therefore, if the aesthetics of school environments – among other things – promote actions, feelings, and thoughts that are in line with democratic civic virtues, such as engagement, care, and open-mindedness,³⁴ then students will be likely to develop a habituated way of being in the world that is engaged, caring, and open-minded³⁵.
- 8) If however, school environments promote anti-social and anti-democratic behaviors such as disengagement, bullying, and aggression, then students will be likely to develop a habituated way of being in the world that is disengaged, thoughtless, and harmful to others³⁶.
- 9) Successful democratic citizenship – as defined by Dewey – requires that citizens express their individual needs, desires, and judgments; communicate their experiences to others; partake in associated work and living; and are aware of the connection that exists between their actions and choices and the wellbeing of others.³⁷
- 10) The four criteria for successful citizenship – as defined by Dewey – require the development of civic virtues for their support and consistent practice.³⁸
- 11) Consequently, if school environments habituate students in civic virtues these virtues will provide support for democratically beneficial citizenship.³⁹ And

³³ Evidence discussed in the section after next on the effects of stress, as well as in Chapters 7-10.

³⁴ See Chart 3 in Chapter 2 for a list of 40 such examples.

³⁵ This conclusion is a logical consequence of points 1 and 5.

³⁶ This conclusion is also a logical consequence of points 1 and 6.

³⁷ These attributes of Dewey's theory of democracy are discussed in Chapters 1.

³⁸ This dependence is explained and discussed in Chapter 2.

school aesthetics can be successfully used in this way to improve civic education.

Supporting this chain of argumentation, the next to sub-sections discuss research on habituation and stress – essential components of my argument. Following this discussion, the third sub-section discusses problems with current civic education programs and gaps in the literature on civic education reform.

Habituation

The role of habituation in shaping people’s behavior has been widely recognized. As early as 1890, William James, in the *Principles of Psychology*, clearly explained the relationship between habit and behavior:

Any sequence of mental action which has been frequently repeated tends to perpetuate itself; so that we find ourselves automatically prompted to *think, feel* or *do* what we have been before accustomed to think, feel, or do, under like circumstances, without any consciously formed *purpose*, or anticipation of results. (p. 112)

Today, the conceptualization of habits is very similar, but expressed in the language of cognitive psychology: “Habits are the results of automatic cognitive processes, [and] such processes [are] develop[ed] by extensive repetition” (Pratkanis & Breckler, 1989, p. 218-9). Frequently, the consequence of repeated activity, choice, or behavior, is the creation of a habit. Behaviors that we frequently repeat are likely to become automatic responses.

³⁹ As discussed in Chapter 6, civic virtue is one of three components necessary for successful civic education and the development of good citizenship. Civic knowledge and civic skills are also important components. While civic virtues are not sufficient for successful democratic citizenship, they are essential. It is this essential component of civic education that my thesis suggests can be developed through the intentional design of school environments.

In such cases, we find ourselves acting and responding without consciously deciding to do so.

Since children spend a considerable portion of their lives in schools, the behaviors, actions, and choices they repeat in the school environment will have a significant influence on shaping patterns of behavior, action, and choice later in their lives, by creating habits.

After [a] decision and action are repeated many times, the action becomes habitual and repeated decision-making becomes unnecessary. The person will carry out the action when placed in the appropriate situation. Most adults, for example, brush their teeth at one or more specific times during the day, without a daily consideration of whether or when to do it. (Pratkanis & Breckler, 1989, p. 220)

This research on habituation means that when, for example, students repeatedly clean up after themselves, consider the effect their behavior is having on other students, participate in group activities, or engage in expressing their experiences, it is likely that these behaviors and inclinations will develop into habits of caring for the environment, considering the effects of their behavior, participating, working together, and communicating effectively. Likewise, if the school environment routinely creates situations where students fight, bully, deface property, or engage in other anti-social behavior, they are likely to develop anti-social habits and patterns of negative interaction with others, lack of care for the environment, and passive, unengaged behavior. And whether a citizen has general ingrained habits of engagement, participation, and care, or habits of disengagement, aggression, and a lack of care, this will affect his political participation and involvement in his community.

Behavior is greatly affected and predicted by practice. The behaviors we consistently witness and reproduce form our habits and contribute to our future patterns of behavior, including future patterns of civic behavior. Additional research, on the effects of stress, shows that environments and interactions that cause stress produce anti-social behavior and deter pro-social behavior. In school settings that create stress in students – through thoughtless building design, over-crowding, poor air quality, high levels of noise, and a lack of daylight, among other negative aesthetic factors – research suggests that the consequence will be the development of habitual anti-social behavior. These conditions will not only discourage the development of democratic civic virtue, they will actively develop behaviors contrary to the health of our democracy.

Stress

As discussed in *Aftereffects of Stress on Human Performance and Social Behavior: A Review of Research and Theory*, by Sheldon Cohen (1980), there is substantial literature indicating a poststimulation effect of stress on performance and behavior. In a variety of studies, subjects were asked to perform tasks during or after exposure to various uncontrollable stressors, such as loud bursts of sound and highly crowded conditions. The studies all found a decreased ability to carry out tasks – such as proof reading, the ability to withstand frustration, and color-word tests – after exposure to unpredictable and uncontrollable stress. In addition to a decrease in competency on tasks requiring concentration and self-control, these studies also found “decreased post-

stimulation helping after exposure to unpredictable, uncontrollable stress” (Cohen, 1980, p. 94). These findings have great significance for whether democratic civic virtues can be developed in stressful school environments. The studies found that after exposure to stress, subjects were less likely to help others, showed “a decreased sensitivity to others, [as well as] a decrease in the recognition of individual differences, and an increase in aggression” (Cohen, 1980, p. 95).

Extrapolating from these studies indicates that if school environments contain unpredictable, uncontrollable stress, then the stressful environments themselves can encourage, and in many cases actively produce, anti-social behavior within students. If citizens spend an average of 7 hours a day, from at least the age of 5 to 16, in environments that decrease their sensitivity to others, decrease their helping, decrease their recognition of individual differences, and increase their aggression, the result is likely to be the creation of anti-social and anti-democratic habits of behavior and interaction. Not only will such a substantial amount of time spent developing habits of anti-social behavior make the chances of developing democratic civic virtues, within schools, much less likely, it also seems likely that these school environments could actively erode democratic civic virtues developed elsewhere. It is also important to note that since the effects are seen post-stress, anti-social behavior produced by exposure to stress-filled school environments is likely to take place, not only within schools, where exposure to the stress is occurring, but also for some time after the stress has stopped. Evidence of these lingering effects can be seen in the occurrence of violence that takes

place on buses and in streets after school.

There have also been studies done on high-density living and time spent in other stressful environments that show the development of a learned pattern of helplessness – which is antithetical to civic virtues such as self-direction, persistence, and individuality – as a result of these environments:

The strongest source of support for the learned helplessness interpretation comes from the naturalistic studies of stress aftereffects. Work in crowded college dormitories (Baum & Valins, 1977), in high-density low-income housing (Rodin, 1976), and in schools located in the air corridor of a busy urban airport (Cohen et al., 1980) all suggested that those living under environmental stress show behavioral manifestations of helplessness. (Cohen, 1980, p. 99)

Once again, these studies show that routine exposure to stressful environments create patterns of behavior that are antithetical to democratic civic virtue. Even those exposed to crowded environments for a short period of time displayed a decrease in democratic civic virtues: “Those subjects who performed high-load tasks and/or were crowded helped less often and for less time than their low-task-load, uncrowded counterparts” (Cohen, 1980, p. 94). These studies have significant implications for how schools should be designed and maintained in order to avoid the active development of anti-democratic behavior, as well as what we must do if we want to actively cultivate democratic civic virtue and develop the potential for citizens who will contribute to the health of our democracy in the future.

These studies show that environmental elements, found in many schools, produce stress in students that lead to anti-democratic behavior, such as a decrease in concentration, a decrease in self-control, a decreased sensitivity to others, a decrease in

the recognition of individual differences, the development of personal helplessness, less inclination to help others, and increase in aggression⁴⁰. As discussed in the previous section, reactions and behaviors routinely carried out soon develop into habituated patterns of behavior and reaction. Together, this empirical evidence suggests that in order to develop democratic civic virtues and reliable democratic behaviors in students, school environments must be designed so that they do not continuously produce anti-social and anti-democratic behaviors and habits. Likewise, school environments and the activities in which students are regularly involved need to entail the routine practice and active implementation of democratic behaviors and dispositions, in order for beneficial democratic virtues to develop into patterns of consistent behavior, upon which successful and healthy citizenship can be founded.

A Critique of Civic Education Reform

Putnam's research indicates precisely why I conclude that it is both worthwhile and necessary to develop democratic civic virtues within American schools. Schools provide a powerful opportunity to fill the gap and stop the trending decline of civic virtues. Unfortunately, although a significant amount of work, effort, and money has been

⁴⁰ These anti-democratic characteristics are antithetical to examples of civic virtues given in Chart 3: decreased concentration makes rational self-direction difficult; a decrease in self-control is opposite to developing self-control; a decreased sensitivity to others is antithetical to caring for others and discerning and respecting the rights of others; a decrease in the recognition of individual differences is antithetical to critical mindedness; personal helplessness is contrary to persistence, self-direction, and individuality; less inclination to help others is antithetical to caring for others and feeling compassion; and increased aggression usually presupposes a lack of awareness, caring for others, rational self-direction, and many other important civic virtues.

spent on improving civic education, little recognition has been given to the role of habituation in the development of civic virtues or to the potentially negative effects of stressful school environments. Likewise, few specific, detailed methods, goals, and suggestions have been given for precisely how to develop democratic civic virtues within students.

An example of the significant amount of work and money spent on increasing and improving civic education in our country is *CIVITAS: A Framework for Civic Education* (1991). This compendium was developed by the Center for Civic Education, and is the result of three years of collaboration between more than forty scholars, the Council for the Advancement of Citizenship, the National Council for the Social Studies in Washington, D.C., and the Pew Charitable Trusts. Intended as “a curriculum framework whose [very] purpose is to revitalize civic education in schools throughout the nation,” as well as to “[specify] the knowledge and skills needed by citizens to perform their roles in American democracy” (*CIVITAS*, 1991, Executive Summary), the scope of *CIVITAS* is broad, and it is representative of much of the best work done on enhancing and increasing civic education. *CIVITAS* provides extensive goals, objectives, and methods for improving civic *knowledge* and some forms of civic *participation*; however, it discusses civic *virtues* only briefly. Like most of the literature in this field, it identifies civic virtues as an essential foundation for democracy but does not provide concrete goals, objectives, or methods for developing, supporting, or practicing them. This lack of detail

and specificity, concerning the development of democratic civic virtues, can be found in much of the current literature on civic education reform.

Similarly, as I discuss in Chapter 3, in the NCSS position statement (1997) the types of opportunities that need to be provided for the development of democratic civic virtues within schools is recognized but few concrete suggestions, for how this development can actually occur, are given:

One precondition is a school environment consistent with the principles and core values of the ideal of civic virtue. To the extent possible, students' lives in schools should be based on fundamental democratic values and the practical application of democratic principles. Careful attention to the school culture is critical if schools are to foster moral and civic virtue. The hidden curriculum of the school has the potential to teach important lessons about authority, responsibility, caring, and respect. The principles and values underpinning the day-to-day operations of the school should be consistent with the values taught to young people...Schools should also provide opportunities for young people to practice virtue. Students should be encouraged and given the opportunity to make positive contributions to the well-being of fellow students and to the school. (p. 2)

In addition to lacking concrete methods for the development of civic virtue, much of the writing done on civic education is aimed at specific social studies and civics teachers and classes. However, my previous discussion makes it clear that a new systemic way of looking at the development of civic virtues within our schools is necessary. For example, it is not enough to spend 40 isolated minutes, 3 times a week, on the development of civic virtues, if the rest of the school day is spent practicing and developing anti-social behaviors and habits encouraged and induced by negative, stressful school environments.

While many researchers and activists recognize this urgent need for improving civic education within schools, and literature from studies both in character and civic

education address these problems and call for improvement, very little of the literature recognizes the aesthetics of school environments as having a rich potential for contributing to the development of these virtues. The literature recognizes the need for increased opportunity for participation, associated living, and engagement, but it fails to see how impactful school environments can be on this development, and little of the literature recognizes that the creation and maintenance of school buildings and grounds can provide an unparalleled opportunity for practice and development of democratic virtues, skills, and behavior.

By combining the research done in civic and character education with the research done on school design, I aim to inspire this recognition, that school aesthetics have a great potential to aid in the development of democratic civic virtues. In Chapters 7 through 10, I give concrete, specific examples of how school aesthetics can be changed in order to facilitate individual expression, to enable sharing of experience and communication, to bring students together through work and shared visions of the future, and to increase the awareness within students of the effect their individual behaviors and actions have on one another. In other words, I provide concrete, detailed examples of how the aesthetics of school environments can be used to reduce school stress and develop healthy habits of democratic skills, behaviors, and dispositions.

EVIDENCE THAT THE AESTHETICS OF ENVIRONMENTS HAVE STRONG BEHAVIORAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL EFFECTS

The Broken Window Theory, written about in the national bestseller, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, by Malcom Gladwell (2005), is a theory built on the observation that the aesthetics of an environment can encourage, if not cause, certain behaviors. First proposed by the criminologists James Q. Wilson and George Kelling, The Broken Window Theory suggests that negative elements of the environment, which are usually considered only nuisances or unsightly irritants, such as graffiti, public disorder, and aggressive panhandling, are in fact invitations to harmful behavior and serious crimes. These minor problems act in the same way as a broken window in a building, such as the one in the image below.



Photograph 12: Buildings with broken windows soon invite further vandalism and can lead to aggressive and violent behavior in surrounding areas. A building left with broken windows indicates that little care or attention is directed toward the building or area around it.

It doesn't take long before "people walking by will conclude that no one cares and no one is in charge. Soon, more windows will be broken, and the sense of anarchy will spread from the building to the street on which it faces, sending a signal that anything goes" (Gladwell, 2005, p. 141).

What The Broken Window Theory recognizes is that the state of the environment communicates a powerful message about the values, commitments, and boundaries of the people who exist within it. An environment, whether it is your house, your neighborhood, your city, or your school, sends a message. If it is clean, ordered, and beautiful, this indicates that someone cares for it and is willing to put time, energy, and resources into creating it, maintaining it, and protecting it. To the contrary, if an environment is broken-down, dirty, and ugly, this sends a message that no one cares or takes responsibility for maintaining it; and this indicates that there is also no one to stand up for it, fight for it, or protect it. The environment is a physical manifestation of the awareness (or lack thereof) of the effect each person within the environment can have. It is a reflection and consequence of the associations (or lack thereof) between the people within the space.

Wilson and Kelling take this observation one step further and argue that it isn't just a lack of care that invites vandals and criminals to an area but rather the environment itself that insights criminal behavior. In *The Tipping Point*, Gladwell explains: "the impetus to engage in a certain kind of behavior is not coming from a certain kind of person but from a feature of the environment" (2005, p. 142). This theory offers a revolutionary insight into criminal behavior and the potential to revolutionize the way we

think about our schools. Instead of seeing criminals or delinquent students – both examples of people engaging in behavior that disrupts their environment and causes harm to those sharing it – as selfish rogues with diminished characters, The Broken Window Theory suggests that in the right (or rather wrong) environment almost anyone could be induced to participate in anti-social, disruptive, or criminal behavior. If this observation is correct, then criminals, as well as students with behavior problems, are people who are “acutely sensitive to [their] environment, who [are] alert to all kinds of cues, and who [are] prompted to commit crimes based on [their] perception of the world” (Gladwell, 2005, p. 150).

An extreme example of this theory arose in 1984 when Bernie Goetz opened fire on four black youths who jumped him on a subway. Contrary to most conventional analysis, The Broken Window Theory suggests:

[T]he showdown on the subway between Bernie Goetz and those four youths had very little to do, in the end, with the tangled psychological pathology of Goetz, and very little as well to do with the background and poverty of the four youths who accosted him, and everything to do with the message sent by the graffiti on the walls and the disorder at the turnstiles. (Gladwell, 2005, p. 150-1)

Wilson and Kelling (1982), referring to the work of Nathan Glazer, wrote that “the proliferation of graffiti, even when not obscene, confronts the subway rider with the inescapable knowledge that the environment he must endure for an hour or more a day is uncontrolled and uncontrollable, and that anyone can invade it to do whatever damage and mischief the mind suggests.” In this way, the graffiti-riddled, trash-filled disarray of a subway can induce a sense of powerlessness and defensiveness so great that it leads to

otherwise unexplained violence. The aesthetics of such an environment also has the ability to create patterns, or habits, of behavior, when people are routinely exposed to them. What this conclusion has to say about our schools is both profound and deeply troubling, considering that over half the school facilities in America are reported as needing improvements in order to put the school in “good overall condition” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012-13). This research suggests the aesthetics of our schools are currently encouraging behaviors and dispositions contrary to those needed by democratic citizens.

Wilson and Kelling are not the only ones to recognize the effects environments have on the people who live, work, and go to school within them. Winston Churchill accurately observed that, “[w]e shape our buildings and thereafter our buildings shape us” (Taylor, 2008, p. 30). Once again, this couldn’t be truer than in our schools. “[B]uildings are... the product of society as a whole – of legislation, of wealth, of technology, of custom, and, above all, of cultural traditions. That is why buildings are so precious: they tell us who and what we are – or wish to be – not only as individuals but as a community (Rybczynski, 1992, p. 191)” (Taylor, 2008, p. 31). As a society, we shape our schools, and thereafter the school environments shape our society by both enabling and constraining the learning and development that can occur within their walls and on their grounds (Upitis, 2010, p. 9). Whether children successfully develop democratic civic virtues, or develop behaviors and habits contrary to the health and maintenance of

democracy, is substantially influenced by the types of environments in which they are educated and raised.

Playing such an important role in children's lives and in their development, every part of the experience children have at school should be consciously considered, and – as the research above shows – this is especially true of the aesthetics of the school environment: an element of schools that is often overlooked or neglected. Taylor voices this sentiment in *Linking Architecture and Education: Sustainable Design of Learning Environments*. She says, “the physical environment is a potent, influential ‘silent curriculum’ that deeply affects learning and behavior” (Taylor, 2008, p. 184). “Unfortunately, the physical environment of the school has become nearly invisible to teachers and families in part because it is so familiar; basic school design has not changed in one hundred years (Brubaker, 1998)” (Taylor, 2008, p. 25).

[S]chool buildings... serve as teachers. The ways that we build and inhabit schools send powerful messages to all who pass through their doors. School architecture profoundly influences the outcomes of education. For a century and a half, we have built schools that lack adequate natural light, comfortable furniture, inviting entryways, and green spaces. There has never been a more important time to break this damaging trend. We will build more new buildings in the first half of the 21st century than have been built in all of recorded human history. For the next several years, construction will begin on two new schools every day in the United States alone, and that doesn't even take into account school renovations. If schools are aesthetically, pedagogically, and environmentally deficient, they will sap the life right out of everyone who enters them. (Upitis, 2010, p. ix)

The abundant building and renovating of schools that is currently being undertaken within the United States makes this an opportune time to turn our attention to the way the

aesthetics of these school environments will contribute to or harm the development of democratic civic virtues within our children – the citizens of tomorrow. Part of making these changes will involve breaking free from the apathy created by history and tradition and enhancing our ability to look with a discriminating eye at what aesthetics in current schools are saying. Throughout the rest of the dissertation, I aim to help awaken these observational and discriminating powers.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I provide empirical evidence that civic virtues are in decline in America, and that this decline is a serious problem for the health and longevity of our democracy. To reverse this tide it is essential to change the education of children because the time spent in school is sufficient for the development of habitual behaviors and reactions, whether pro-social or anti-democratic. Since schools can expose children to many hours of high-stress, and thus encourage anti-social behaviors and habits, school environments have a powerful role to play in the development of healthy citizens. The upside of the research on habituation and stress, together with the conclusions from The Broken Window Theory is that, according to Gladwell, “you don’t have to solve the big problems to solve crime. You can prevent crimes just by scrubbing off graffiti and arresting fare-beaters: crime epidemics have Tipping Points...” (p. 151). While it seems likely that to systemically “solve crime” more will need to be done than changing the

aesthetics of an environment, this theory makes it clear that small changes to the environment can have a profound impact on the kind of behavior it elicits. And, “[i]t isn’t just serious criminal behavior, in the end, that is sensitive to environmental cues, it is all behavior. Weird as it sounds, ...it is possible to be a better person on a clean street or in a clean subway than in one littered with trash and graffiti” (p. 168). This fact applies directly to our schools: how we craft and care for our school environments is crucially important not only to who our children are but also to who they will likely become. The success of our civic education programs and the resulting strength of civic virtue within our citizens will be affected – either positively or negatively – by the environments in which we educate our children.

While the need for improved civic education is widely recognized, there are few concrete suggestions or methods given for improving the development of democratic civic virtues in American schools. However, by looking to the literature in environmental psychology and environmental and school design, it becomes clear that by consciously designing the aesthetics of school environments we can develop the democratic civic virtues that are currently eroding, which so are essential to the health and longevity of our democracy.

Focusing on school aesthetics can contribute to improved civic education because, not only is an environment the consequence of people’s behavior and actions, it can also be a catalyst for this same behavior and activity. In an environment that is orderly, clean, and beautiful it is easier for the inhabitants to act virtuously, to, for example, express

creativity, connect with others, be aware of one's surroundings, and act with civility, respect, and generosity. Likewise, in a routinely disordered, dirty, ugly environment, which causes unpredictable and uncontrollable stress, it is harder for inhabitants to act virtuously and difficult for them to develop these virtues in the first place. By ensuring that our children attend school in beautiful environments that are not aesthetically harmful, and by making students aware of the importance of the aesthetics of their school environments, transformed environments can end up transforming the students themselves. Realizing the power and transformative potential of the aesthetics of school environments has the ability to contribute greatly to the improvement of civic education, for nowhere can this realization be put to greater use than in our schools.

Chapter 5: Art, Beauty, and School Aesthetics

“It is amazing how complete is the delusion that beauty is good.”
– Leo Tolstoy (1889)

In the first chapter, I define an ideal conception of democracy using Dewey’s democratic theory, to provide a goal toward which American citizens can strive and guidelines by which they can hope to improve their civic education programs. In the second chapter, I discuss the importance of democratic civic virtues both for Dewey’s theory of ideal democracy and for contemporary political theorist’s understanding of citizenship. In the third chapter, I explain the important role public schools can play in American civic education and locate my thesis within contemporary literature on civic and character education. In Chapter 4, I then provide evidence that civic virtues have declined in America and suggest initial reasons for believing that the aesthetics of school environments can play a role in improving civic education programs in American schools. This chapter continues toward showing the role the aesthetics of school environments can play in improving civic education by defining school aesthetics, art, and beauty, as they are used in the proceeding chapters.

This chapter also provides a short account of the history of art education within American schools – including its philosophical roots. I suggest that my thesis is in line with the original reason for including art in American public schools. That is, I suggest that beauty and art should be incorporated in school environments for the purpose of developing democratic civic virtues within students. I claim that this development can occur *through* exposure to and engagement with art and beauty. This reasoning for

including art and beauty within schools is in contrast to the belief that art should be included within schools, for the more obviously utilitarian end, of developing specific skills *in* the arts.

Essentially, I am arguing for education *through* art and beauty as opposed to education *in* art and beauty. This distinction will affect not only the pedagogical and theoretical reasons for including art in schools, it will also affect the practical ways art and beauty are implemented in schools: Education *through* art and beauty will focus on independent creative uses and applications of beauty in schools, as well as practice through artful creations contributing to the school environment, while education *in* art and beauty is likely to focus more on linear instruction and isolated projects – for practicing particular skills – as well as rote memorization and identification of styles and genres exhibited by famous artists. This distinction is important, but it should not be taken to mean that when students are engaged in developing democratic civic virtues, through participation in and contributions made to their school environment, that they will not also develop – at times significant – artistic skills and talent. This approach involves extensive exposure to and practice in various artistic activities, during which artistic skills and abilities will unavoidably develop. The difference is simply that this artistic development is neither the motivating reason for including such engagement, nor is it a driving force determining the types of activities and scope of involvement of the students.

At the end of the chapter I also discuss the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and their Turnaround Arts initiative. In explaining the details of this current initiative – based on the committee's landmark research report of May 2011: *Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future Through Creative Schools* – I discuss the compatibility of my thesis with its methods and goals, as well as clarifying the additions I believe could contribute further to the benefits of this program.

Imagine beautiful schools...

Beauty is not only in the spectacular glow of a sunset, in the delightful face of a child, in the incredible structure of a flower, in the joy of bright colors, in the shape of a sculpture, in the words of a poem, in the voice of a song, in the notes of a symphony. There is beauty also in the acknowledgement and expression of a feeling, in the logical process of thinking, in the discovery of a truth, in the realization of harmony, in the astonishment arising from observing the perfection with which a tree or a plant is put together.

Beauty brings us back to that state of vulnerability, innocence and abandon in which, like a child, we are taken by the hand to disclose the kingdom of wonders and marvels thus putting us in touch with Nature where the miracle of existence is renewed each day.

We need beauty around us. Beauty is like a perfume impalpable but yet so very strong. Beauty is the essence of life. Its feeling pushes the artist to *create*, opens the heart to *love*, leads the brain to *clarify*, invites the mind to *comprehend* and brings the body to *participate*.

You find yourself in Beauty, unexpectedly absorbed by beauty.

(Scaravelli, 1991, p. 97, emphases added)

SCHOOL AESTHETICS, ART, AND BEAUTY: DEFINITIONS

In this section I specify exactly what school aesthetics, art, and beauty mean when I propose that students should continuously be involved in creating and maintaining artistic and beautiful school environments, for the improvement of civic education and the development of democratic civic virtues.

School Aesthetics

As Lea Hofel explains, “Aesthetics is the science of ‘the beautiful.’ Literally, it means the ‘science of the senses’ and is concerned with sensuous perception and its realizations. The term derives from the Greek term *aisthesis* (αισθησις), which means ‘perception’ and ‘feeling,’ as well as ‘realization’ and ‘understanding’ (Urmson, 1990)” (2008, p. 1). In line with this definition, by school aesthetics I mean every element of school environments (buildings and grounds) that effect student senses, which they can feel and realize: this includes what schools look, feel, smell, and sound like, as well as their rhythm, and beauty. In talking about the aesthetics of schools, I do not intend to evoke a meaning of aesthetics indicating a formal study of or the attempt to define beauty and taste. Rather, the important emphasis, in this dissertation, is on the development within individuals of conscious awareness of the aesthetics of their environments and the effects these aesthetics have on behavior, the development of virtue, and habituation.

At one time or another, everyone has experienced the effect the aesthetics of an environment can have on his or her mood and behavior. Think about the last time you

were at the DMV. It probably wasn't just the long wait that made you irritated, annoyed, and ruder than you had to be; the uncomfortable plastic chairs, the crowded waiting area, the old, worn linoleum floor, the harsh tone of the voice calling endless numbers over the sound system, and the stale, overused air, depicted in the image below, all undoubtedly contributed to your negative experience and response.



Photograph 13: DMVs often provide good examples of unpleasant aesthetics that cause stress and increase irritability, such as little natural light, uncomfortable chairs, crowding, loud unpredictable noises, and stale air.

In contrast, it isn't just the time off work that makes time spent at the beach relaxing and rejuvenating; it is also the soft breeze against your sun-baked skin, the pleasingly-rough sand between your toes, and the smell of coconut-scented sunscreen, all hinted at in the image below, that add to your relaxation and boost your enjoyment.



Photograph 14: Beaches provide a relaxing atmosphere because they are aesthetically interesting and pleasing. The feeling of sand, the sound of waves, the smell of salt, the warmth of the sun, the brisk breeze all enliven and relax.

In short, our environments matter. More specifically, the aesthetics of an environment contribute to our experience, our behavior, and what we take away from every situation. In what follows it becomes clear that since the environments we live, work, play, and especially raise our children in matter, specifically, in schools, where everything should be included or excluded with the goal of providing the best environment for learning and development, the color of the walls, the quality of the toys, and the way a teacher calls the students together – among so many other important aesthetic factors of the environment – matter immensely to the development of democratic civic virtues, desirable civic behaviors, and positive individual and social habits.

The most successful aesthetic education requires not only that children are surrounded by beautiful things but that they also participate actively, on a daily basis, in their creation and care. At the end of the day, the classroom can be set straight, messes and disorder created throughout the day cleared away, and the room made ready to

receive the students fresh in the morning. As demonstrated throughout the rest of the dissertation, simply by participating in the care of their environment, students can go from knowing nothing more than passive experience to becoming engaged, aware caretakers and creators. Through this process, they become thoughtful about their daily actions and the effects they have on the environment and those who share it with them. Through their participation and growing awareness, as well as through their constant exposure to consciously created and carefully maintained environments, students can develop the virtues necessary (although not independently sufficient) for the maintenance of a healthy and vibrant democracy.

Art

By enjoying, as well as creating and caring for, the aesthetics of school environment, students are engaging in art, stimulating their imagination and perception, and becoming aware of and sensitive to the world surrounding them. As Greene (1995) explains, “The point of enabling our students to both engage in art as a maker and experience existing artworks is to release them to be more fully present...The ends in view are multiple, but they surely include the stimulation of imagination and perception, a sensitivity to various modes of seeing and sense making, and a grounding in the situations of lived life” (p. 138).

However, we commonly have a limited view of what counts as art. The great Russian novelist, Leo Tolstoy (1995) explains,

We are accustomed to understand art to be only what we hear or see in theatres, concerts and exhibitions together with buildings, statues, poems and novels...But all this is but the smallest part of the art by which we communicate with one another in life. All human life is filled with works of art of every kind – from cradle-song, jest, mimicry, the ornamentation of houses, dress and utensils, to church services, buildings, monuments and triumphal processions. It is all artistic activity. (pp. 124-5)

Within this dissertation, I follow Tolstoy's understanding of art: All human life is filled with artistic activity. All forms of intentional expression, communication, association, and creation are artistic activities. Speaking of children and this expanded conception of art, Kim John Payne and Lisa M. Ross (2009) add this to our understanding:

The image that comes to mind when I think about children and art is not a refrigerator covered with drawings. It is an earlier image: a one-year-old's pudgy legs half hidden in a mudhole, the hose nearby still dribbling water. Registering on his face is delight...delight at the mud's cool sludginess in his toes, but also a delightful growing awareness of what he can *do* with that black glop. Children need to create. They need to make art, to feel and see and move their worlds in new directions. (p. 85)

This image of the one-year-old is illustrative of my understanding of art: The one year old is engaged in artistic activity. This means she is actively determining her world. She is fully awake, aware of what surrounds her, and filled with delight at the possibilities of her own creative powers. Through these artistic activities, she is developing an understanding that what she does matters to the world – she is learning through practice and experience that she has the ability to contribute to and to change the world. This image perfectly captures what I mean when I advocate engaging with the aesthetics of school environments in an artistic way: in a way that encourages awareness, delight, and

active agency of the individual, as well as discretion, future plans for creation, and imaginations of potential worlds yet to be created.

The intended meaning of art or artistic activity, then, within this dissertation, contains two parts: 1) something is created, and 2) the creation is, at least in part, for the sake of expression. There are many activities where something is created out of necessity, without the additional goal of expression, and these activities are not included in my meaning. For example, a dwelling can be created simply for a utilitarian end because shelter is needed. An emergency lean-to is an example of such a structure, as is pre-fabricated housing, created to do nothing more than provide shelter as economically as possible. While I do not call the creation of these structures art, if a house is designed, built, or decorated in order that it is beautiful, or to express a particular sentiment, the activity then becomes artistic. Likewise, activities such as sewing, cooking, and gardening can be purely utilitarian. In order for these activities to fall under the intended meaning of artistic, the person doing them must have an additional purpose of creating beauty or expression. In short, art requires a *free, expressive, and creative* activity, beyond the bounds of necessity.

While in each case the activity may seem to be the same, whether it is done merely for utilitarian ends or also with the intention of expression, the physical outcome, as well as the internal development of the artist, will be different. For example, a pot designed merely to carry water will look different from one that is also designed to be beautiful or to express a particular story or feeling. Likewise, the process through which

the individual goes, and his or her consequent development, will also differ. With only utilitarian ends the creator of the pot will consider requirements based on physical restraints and needs. With artistic ends, the creator will employ his aesthetic judgment, his creativity, and his desire for expression. He will also have to consider how best to communicate his intended vision or message. This creative, self-directed, expressive process is what differentiates the creation of the pot in the first example from that in the second.

Additionally, this definition of art implicitly requires intention. A machine, for example, can produce something unique but this process will not be considered creative or expressive because the machine has no intention of either creating something or of expressing itself. Hence, the production of machines will not be considered art – unless an intentional person is using the machine either to create or express himself – because there is no intention involved. Likewise, unintentional expressions produced by a person will also not be considered art. Rather, art must be an *intentional, free* activity of *creation* for the purpose of *expression*.

Beauty

Beauty is closely related to and bound up with the previous definitions of school aesthetics and art. Beauty is also often ephemeral, personal, and difficult to define. I find some of the most successful attempts to capture the essence of beauty to lie within

descriptions of the experience of beauty⁴¹ as opposed to within stiff, formal definitions. Ultimately, though, I am not concerned, in this dissertation, with defining beauty or giving specifications determining the bounds of its experience. Rather, I am interested in the effects of beauty: the ways we recognize it, what it tells us, and how it affects our judgments, behaviors, and habits.

I suggest that humans have an aesthetic sense, or a part of them that recognizes and reacts to their environment, sometimes even before they consciously turn their attention to it. What our aesthetic sense identifies, before we even have time to think about it, is whether the people living in a place care for it. Beauty and aesthetic pleasure, in man-made objects and environments, are often the consequences of focused attention and transformative work that can create order out of chaos, happiness out of misery, and hope out of despair. The ugliness of a manmade environment indicates that through a lack of care, consideration, and connection the men who live there have failed to create an environment that expresses their humanity and that invites engagement and awareness.

Especially within schools, beauty, order, and cleanliness often indicate safety. As in the picture below, of the open classroom design at Orestad College in Copenhagen, Denmark, the bright light, open structure, clean lines, artistic design, and beautiful aesthetics make this an inviting environment, which looks interesting to explore and safe to inhabit.

⁴¹ See for example Chapter One: The Experience of Beauty, in *Beauty: The Value of Values*, by Frederick Turner, 1991.



Photograph 15: The sweeping, open stairway, uniquely shaped study areas, comfortable seating, natural materials, and ample natural light all enhance Orestad College and create an inviting, interesting, and safe impression on those who use and observe it.

In contrast – demonstrated by the image below of Highland Park Community High school, in Michigan – ugliness, disrepair, and filth can be warning signs, indicating that our health, safety, and peace may be in danger. In the image below, the broken walls and ceiling, dimly lit passageway, and dirty floor make this school hallway repugnant. Aversion to this space and concern for safety and health are all naturally inspired by the aesthetics of such a space.



Photograph 16: Broken walls, stained ceiling, dirty floors, dim lighting, and confined design all make this hallway unappealing and a target for further neglect and destruction.

As I show in Chapters 7 through 10, at best, ugliness in schools encourages neglect and, at worst, promotes destruction and violence, while beautiful surroundings at school are likely to promote further interest, harmony, and engagement in the students who experience it. Beauty allows students to open themselves to their school environment, it encourages them to appreciate it, to feel safe and comfortable within it, and it rewards their attention with pleasurable experiences, as in the classroom below, containing an artistic window design, soft-filtered light, and pleasing, warm colors:



Photograph 17: This classroom is made beautiful through the use of natural materials, filtered natural light, warm colors, and an artistic window display.

Ugliness, on the other hand, is likely to make students withdraw, turn inward and away from the damaging school environment as though they had been physically assaulted, and evokes numbness as a shielding mechanism. The image below shows an example of such an ugly space, with no natural light, rows of uninteresting tables, and harsh wall graphics:



Photograph 18: This lunchroom is narrow, lacks natural light and views, and is sparsely decorated. Such uninspiring educational environments suppress students, often evoking numbness and disengagement.

In this way, students are likely either to be suppressed or enlivened by the ugliness or beauty that surrounds them at school; and this will have affects on the democracy of which they are a part.

But it is more than just our natural inclinations, inspired by our aesthetic senses, which make beauty so impactful. As Fredrick Schiller explains, “Beauty is the only possible expression of freedom in phenomena” (1795, p. 111, footnote 1). Schiller contends that the creation of beauty elevates even petty objects and menial tasks, setting free and ennobling not only the artist but also that which the artists has made beautiful, as well as others who experience the transformation he has created. In this way, beauty has a dual effect: both creators of beauty and those who witness beauty are transformed, elevated, and brought closer to freedom. Beauty has these potential effects and it is the awareness and creation of such a characteristic in our schools that my thesis advocates.

Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10 provide suggestions for, and examples of, how to consciously utilize the aesthetics of school environments to help develop democratic civic virtues within students. These chapters contain many visual examples of school environments that have been enlivened through the creation and application of art, beauty, and aesthetic attention.

THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF ART EDUCATION

In this section, I show that the way in which I advocate art and aesthetic awareness as part of education in public schools is in the original sense that art education was intended to be employed: for the development of democratic citizenship. By art education I mean something close to Greene (2001), when she says, “Art Education is the empowerment of individuals to spin visions of worlds as worlds otherwise might be.” In other words, I argue that art education should be aimed at training individuals to employ their critical judgment of the world around them, to use their imagination and creativity to produce alternative options for its function or design, and to actively create a form of their vision in the world through their active determinacy. It is these activities upon which an ideal democracy is built.

According to Richard Siegesmund, in *Art Education and a Democratic Citizenry*, art education in American schools can be traced back to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Kant conceived of “the transcendental aesthetic imagination” (1929) as “a place where one was capable of shaping sense, experience and prior knowledge into unique

ideas and representations” (Siegesmund, 2013, p. 302). This understanding of aesthetics meant that, for Kant, aesthetic imagination was a cognitive skill or a means and way of thinking. As Kant understood it, aesthetics was not a field of Artistic Education, but a field of Political Science. Kant believed that aesthetics “prepared individuals to participate in a new political order.” Aesthetic imagination allowed individuals to construct personal understanding, and it was this skill that Kant believed was required for self-governing citizens (Siegesmund, 2013, p. 302).

Working from and expanding on Kant’s philosophy, Friedrich Schiller advocated “a distinct discipline of aesthetic education to shape imaginatively responsible democratic citizenry.” Arguing that artistic activity trained and embodied autonomous thinking, Schiller was interested in arts education, not as a means to train skilled artists, but as a method for awakening *Anschauung*, “an intellectual attentiveness to how we are in the world and how we are in relation to others around us.” Similar to Kant, Schiller believed that this understanding, awareness, and capacity, “was a necessary skill to be a competent citizen charged with the responsibility of maintaining self-governance” (Siegesmund, 2013, p. 302).

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, a Swiss pedagogue and educational reformer, was responsible for transforming Schiller’s philosophical ideas into curricular prescriptions. Pestalozzi transformed Schiller’s aesthetic theory into art education, following Schiller’s belief that the focus should be on “training individuals to think for themselves” rather than on producing good art or design. After visiting Pestalozzi’s schools, Horace Mann,

an American educational reformist – who is credited as the “Father of the Common School Movement” – returned to the United States “advocating the inclusion of Art Education in American schools for the development of responsible democratic practice (Efland, 1990)” (Siegesmund, 2013, p. 304).

However, this goal of democratic education was soon superseded by a more immediately utilitarian aim of developing skills for the workforce. Quickly, within American schools, art education became almost exclusively about the development of skills in different media, and later included the identification of famous works of art. All of which taught easily assessable skills and knowledge with useful applications. But, as Siegesmund warns,

Through our present system of education, how we teach art risks the loss of art’s character – as art belongs to our epoch of *self-determining individualism* in the service of sustaining authentic dialogue with *democratic community*. Educating a democratic consciousness was art’s original intended contribution to the project of public school. The play, the unpurposefulness, of art is critical. Yet, in serving the ends of education, we may drain art of this essential role. (p. 305, emphasis added)

My thesis attempts to reinstate art and aesthetic consciousness within public schools in a way that honors and utilizes its essential role: the education of democratic citizens. As the preceding historical account demonstrates, the understanding of art I employ in my thesis is neither new nor unique. Rather, this view of art coincides with a theoretical thread leading back to the philosophy of Kant. I am arguing for a general shift in the framework and underpinnings of the entire educational method, through consciousness of the environment. This shift – to include the creation and maintenance of

art and beauty in everything that is done and learned within schools – I suggest, should be made in an effort to contribute to improved American civic education. Community living and care, and individual expression and engagement, cannot be taught as facts in isolated classes, but must be learned through practice and habituation. True communities, which require collaboration, participation, and care, must be fostered within schools, and through living within, and contributing to, these communities, children can develop into healthy, contributing, democratic citizens. In order to promote such school environments, I am arguing for a paradigm shift back to the originally intended purpose of art education. For, as Slouka says, art teaches us “not what to do but how to be” (2009, p. 37).

Following the perspective that art education can be significantly transforming for students, the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities is advocating the use of art in schools in their Turnaround Arts initiative. “Turnaround Arts is a public-private partnership that uses the arts to help narrow the achievement gap, increase student engagement and improve the culture and climate in the country’s highest poverty schools.⁴²” However, while recognizing the benefits of integrated art education for academic achievement, creativity, school climate, attendance, and student engagement, this initiative fails to explicitly draw the connection between these educational benefits and the improvement of civic education, the development of civic virtues, and the health of our democracy. Rather, the driving goal behind *Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America’s Future through Creative Schools* is to show the economic and

⁴² <http://turnaroundarts.peah.gov/>.

employment advantages that can come from integrating art-education in American schools.

The following is a summary provided in the report listing the benefits of arts education supported by their research review (examples of democratic civic virtues, from Chart 3, are in italics). This review shows an improvement in:

- Student achievement, typically as represented by reading and mathematics performance on high stakes tests, including transfer of skills learning from the arts to learning in other academic areas—for example, the spatial-temporal reasoning skills developed by music instruction;
- Student motivation and *engagement*, including improved attendance, *persistence*, focused attention, heightened educational aspirations, and intellectual risk taking;
- Development of habits of mind including problem solving, *critical and creative thinking*, dealing with ambiguity and complexity, integration of multiple skill sets, and *working with others*; and
- Development of social competencies, including *collaboration* and *team work skills*, social *tolerance*, and self-confidence (2011, p. 16, emphasis added).

While all of these advantages can support improved economics and employment, the italicized benefits above are also one and the same with examples of civic virtue given in Chapter 3. Since the research shows development of engagement, persistence, critical thinking, creativity, working with others, collaboration, team work, tolerance, and cooperation as the result of integrated arts programs, and since these characteristics have

previously been identified as civic virtues capable of supporting the essential characteristics of democracy – as identified by Dewey – it would be only advantageous for the President’s Committee to explicitly recognize the potential additional benefits of arts education for improving civic education and strengthening our democracy, along with its economic and employment benefits. Hence, while research demonstrates a correlation between arts education and civic education – through the development of democratic civic virtues – and while the arts are being recognized as powerful tools for increasing student engagement, development, and achievement, the original intention behind arts education in public schools – the civic education of democratic citizens – is still not being fully recognized or utilized. I suggest that such an explicit recognition would lend further impetus for the implementation of such programs and would help craft the programs in such a way that they were of particular benefit to the improvement of our schools’ civic education programs.

CONCLUSION

Democracy, as an ideal, is fantastic. It is built upon the notion that free individuals can intentionally come together to collaboratively build and sustain a community. In a way unlike any other form of government, democracy is fundamentally tied to the individual development of its citizens. Democracy’s very existence requires faith in the abilities of men to change, grow, and develop in such a way that they can work together to guide their community. Instead of placing responsibility for successful

government and the health of the community on external decrees or hierarchical order, democracy places this responsibility on its citizenry. Whether or not an ideal democratic community succeeds or fails depends, in large part, upon the characters, decisions, and actions of the citizens that comprise it and whether or not these aspects of the citizens rest upon well-developed democratic civic virtues. Ideologically, the ideal form of democracy requires that faith and trust be placed in humanity, in the ability and desire of individuals both to be free and to come together in such a way that they can build and sustain a successful community.

This type of faith and trust in humanity is evident and strengthened nowhere as strongly as it is in the arts. Art, beauty, and aesthetics are humanistic; they express human affairs, nature, and values, while, at the same time, developing and deepening man's understanding of himself as an individual and as a member of a group. Art, beauty, and aesthetic care require trust and faith in men's abilities to express themselves and to materially affect and create the world around them – individually as well as within community. Art and aesthetics identify man as creative – capable of creating, changing, building, making, and determining the physical world, based on nothing more than his own generative capacities. In this way, democracy and art have the same origin: faith in man as a creator; faith that men can envision a reality different from what currently exists and can make this vision a physical reality.

The founding fathers were political artists. Instead of creating a painting, statue, or an opera, they created a country. And this country was founded upon a view of its

citizens as artists, i.e., as willing and capable of creating and recreating their homes, towns, cities, states, and country from nothing more than the inspiration of their own creative impulses⁴³. In this dissertation, I argue that in order for democracy to be successful and healthy, democratic citizens must be *artists of democracy* and their behavior must be founded on virtues, which are both shared by artists and developed by participating in the creation of artistic and beautiful aesthetics.

This chapter provides descriptions and definitions for how aesthetics, art, and beauty are used throughout the rest of the dissertation. In Chapter 7, the difficulties of pinpointing beauty and applying it to school aesthetics for the improvement of civic education will be discussed. While it is difficult to define beauty or to reach agreement across multiple people as to what is beautiful, each person's aesthetic sense can play an important role in engaging him in the care and active determination of his environment and community. Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10 will discuss the specific correlations that have been found to exist between the aspects of school environments that affect student senses and their behavior, character, and dispositions.

⁴³ Admittedly, their conception of who counted as full citizens was limited when compared with today's view.

Chapter 6: Transforming School Aesthetics

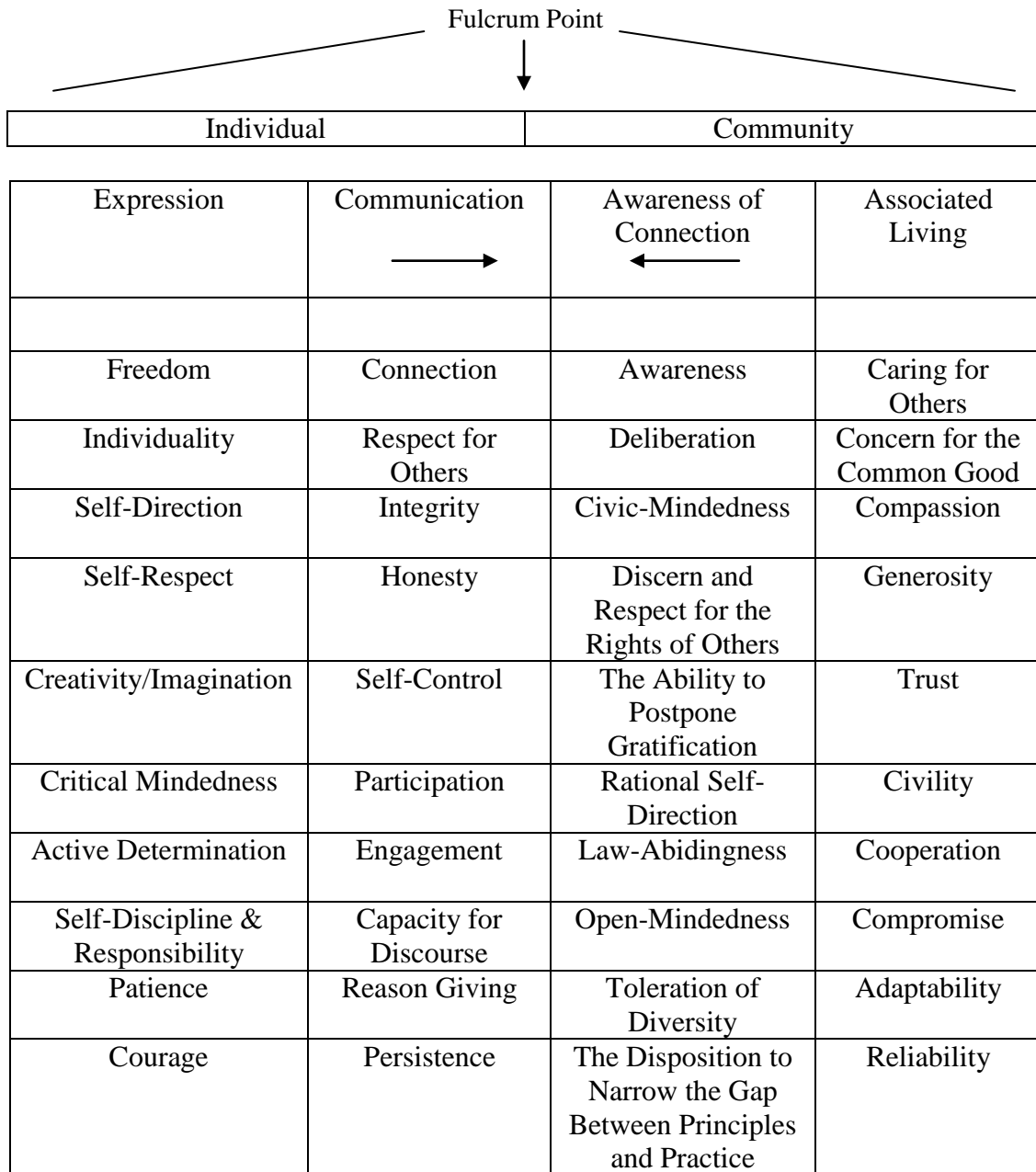
“If we can't imagine the ideal, we'll never evolve the real.”
– Nair Prakash (2007)

This chapter introduces the following four chapters – Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10 – which show how, specifically, art and beauty can be used in school aesthetics to contribute to the improvement of civic education. Each of these three chapters discusses how specific school aesthetics, can improve civic education by 1) developing any of the forty civic virtues, which support Dewey’s four criteria essential for democracy, given as examples in Chapter 2 and/or by 2) meeting any of the criteria identified in Chapters 1 through 3 as important for successful civic education. Chapter 7 shows how the visual aesthetics of the inside of schools can be used to improve civic education by developing democratic civic virtues and meeting criteria for successful civic education. Chapter 8 shows how the visual aesthetic outside of schools can also improve civic education in both ways 1 and 2. Chapter 9 discusses the rest of a school’s aesthetics, those that affect student hearing, touch, taste, smell, and rhythm, and show how they can develop democratic civic virtues and contribute to improved civic education. And Chapter 10 discusses the specific example of integrating nature into schools – inside and out – and the contributions it can make to improved civic education by both providing beautiful aesthetics and continual opportunities for student participation and creation.

The forty examples of civic virtues that support expression, communication, association, and consciousness of connection – the four criteria identified by Dewey as essential for an ideal democracy – are listed again below, in Chart 3. Throughout the next

three chapters, I discuss research and philosophic opinions indicating a correlation between school aesthetics, and the development of many of these virtues.

Chart 3: Examples of Democratic Civic Virtues



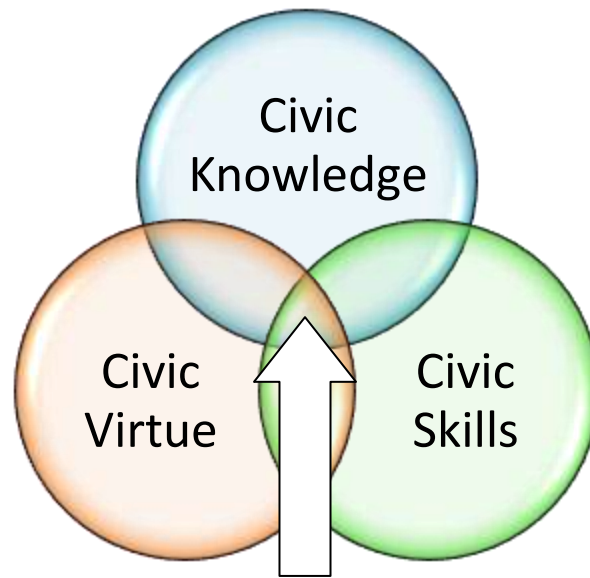
In addition to developing these democratic civic virtues in students, I argue that school aesthetics and participation in the arts can contribute to the improvement of civic education by fulfilling the criteria for successful civic education, identified in Chapters 1 through 3. These criteria were derived from examining suggestions for improved civic education, discussions on civic virtues, and Dewey's ideal theory of democracy. Starting with Dewey's ideal theory, gives us an ideal by which we can guide our striving for improved civic education. Without an ideal vision of democracy, it is harder to notice when school policies and practices do not further democratic civic educational ends. Likewise, without an ideal vision of democracy, toward which it is aiming, it is harder to identify beneficial practices and characteristics of successful civic education. Even though it is impossible that America can be transformed into Dewey's ideal vision of democracy – especially through only the improvement of its schools' aesthetics – using Dewey's ideal theory is helpful for laying out characteristics that can improve our civic education programs. These characteristics, identified in Chapters 1 through 3 are listed and summarized below. In the next three chapters I discuss how consciously crafting the environmental aesthetics of schools and engaging students in the process of creating and maintaining beautiful and artistic school aesthetics can contribute to civic education programs that have the following characteristics.

- 1) General goals and methods for civic education should be provided but these should be flexible enough that the specifics of each school's needs, values, and inspirations can determine the details of the programs, and so each program can change as needed to address new problems and needs.

- 2) Ideals for our civic education programs should be cherished as leading to ever greater improvement. Although perfection should not be the goal, high objectives and standards are still essential to achieve improvement.
- 3) Civic education should focus on developing behaviors and traits that affect citizens' "ways of life," such that they embody a democratic way of being exemplified by awareness, participation, and engagement, through dispositions necessary for citizens to express themselves, communicate their experiences, live and work in association with others, and be conscious of the connection between their actions and the well-being of others.
- 4) Civic education programs should provide opportunities for students to contribute to others, their school, and the wider community by partaking in community service learning and contributing to communal celebrations and festivals.
- 5) Civic education should include many opportunities for students to participate in cooperative learning activities where they have ample opportunities to evaluate different options, work together with other students, and find mutually satisfying solutions.
- 6) Successful civic education should provide routine exposure to environments and behaviors that develop democratic civic virtues because habituation is necessary for their development.
- 7) Civic education should aim to develop democratic virtues within citizens in a balanced way that supports the development of both individual and communal dispositions, thus encouraging a creative dynamic.

The following four chapters make a case for the contributions school aesthetics and student participation in the arts can make to the improvement of civic education in America. As discussed in Chapter 3, civic education contains three generally recognized parts: civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic virtue. As shown in Chart 6, below, the development of all three is necessary for adequate and successful civic education of democratic citizenship:

Chart 6: Civic Education



Good Democratic Citizenship
(Beneficial civic behavior and participation)

While civic knowledge, skills, and virtues are each essential for good civic education and good democratic citizenship, none is sufficient, on its own. In what follows, I give specific examples of how school aesthetics and student participation in the arts can be used to develop democratic civic virtues. While this development is essential for improved civic education – and as discussed in Chapter 3, is the part of civic education most often overlooked and lacking in practical suggestions – the development of civic virtues will not, in and of itself, ensure good citizenship or successful democratic participation and behavior. Consequently, while I argue that school aesthetics and student participation in the arts can contribute to the improvement of civic education and democratic citizenship, I am not claiming that beautiful school aesthetics, and students’

participation in their maintenance and creation, is sufficient for creating good citizens, without the additional benefits of adequate education in civic knowledge and civic skills, which I do not discuss in this dissertation.

The first section in this chapter provides a summary of the specific suggestion I make in Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10 for the improvement of civic education in schools through art and aesthetics. The second section discusses the aesthetic philosophies of and school environments in Montessori schools, Reggio Emilia schools, and Waldorf schools, because each of these schools recognizes the importance of educational environments and consciously utilize the aesthetics of their schools for student development. In this section I discuss both the similarities and the differences between these schools and the suggestions I make in this dissertation for the improvement of school aesthetics. While these three types of schools offer helpful examples of many of the suggestions I make in the following three chapters – and while I utilize photographs of many schools of these types to demonstrate my points – they are all private schools and their consciousness of educational environments are tied to their specific pedagogical philosophies. In contrast, I suggest that beautiful and artistic environments should be common in all schools, especially in public schools, and that one of their primary uses should be contributions to successful civic education programs.

The third and final section of this chapter explains that all the examples and suggestions I provide within this dissertation are meant to be taken as examples and suggestions and not as ridged prescriptions for uniform school design. The most

important effect I desire from this dissertation is that it inspires others to pay attention to their aesthetic awareness and to contribute to the creation of schools that could become beautiful, creative, expressive seedbeds of democratic civic virtue. To achieve this goal, the individuals within each school community will have to envision artistic and inspirational aesthetics that expresses the unique cultures, values, and dreams of their community.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS 7, 8, 9, AND 10: SCHOOL AESTHETICS

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 discuss the correlation between the aesthetics of school environments that effect students' senses – sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell, and sense of rhythm – and the improvement of civic education in American schools. Chapter 7: Visual Aesthetics: Inside Schools provides evidence that including the following environmental aesthetics within schools can contribute to the improvement of civic education and the development of democratic civic virtues:

- Present relatively empty walls, ample negative space, simplicity, and lack of clutter.
- Emphasize beauty – display famous artwork and artwork created by teachers and student.
- Incorporate color to make the space warm and inviting. Also use color to encourage and define the intended use of space.
- Provide adequate lighting, especially ample natural light.
- Create a unified aesthetic.

- Supply orderly, neat storage.
- Use soft materials to increase warmth and comfort of the space.

Chapter 8: Visual Aesthetics: Outside Schools discusses the importance of creating a unique and connected sense of place in schools. This chapter explains how such a sense of place can be created by consciously designing the visual aesthetics of the outside of school buildings, and provides evidence for the correlation between the following list of aesthetics, the development of democratic civic virtues, and the improvement of civic education:

- Create a unique style and visual aesthetic.
- Connect buildings and grounds to surrounding ecology, culture, and history through materials and design.

Chapter 9 discusses school aesthetics that affect the rest of students' senses: hearing, touch, taste, smell, and sense of rhythm. This chapter presents research indicating that these aesthetics are correlated to civic virtues and can aid in the improvement of civic education.

Hearing

- Control noise level so it is low to moderate.
- Keep reprimands positive in tone and low in volume.
- Use calming music to effect atmosphere.

Touch

- Be conscious of materials used in the classroom.
 - Use wooden furniture and toys.
 - Use soft, warm, and comfortable materials.
- Control temperature and humidity to provide optimal learning environment.

Smell and Taste

- Cook healthy foods in schools so experience of pleasant smells and tastes can be maximized.

Rhythm

- Have a consciously rhythmic schedule.
- Assign each class a stable home-room for which they can gain connection and feel responsibility.
- Celebrate routine festivals.
- Incorporate nature.

After discussing the evidence for believing these characteristics can contribute to the improvement of civic education, and providing photographic examples of their implementation, I apply these characteristics and considerations to a part of schools that is often neglected and forgotten in crafting school aesthetics: school bathrooms. I discuss ways for improving the aesthetics of school bathrooms for the benefit of students and their development. Finally, I discuss potential problems and objections to the suggestions

within this chapter and provide helpful examples of places, schools, or programs that have successfully achieved, or are advocating for similar changes.

Chapter 10: Nature discusses the incorporation of nature in schools. Nature in schools adds to the aesthetic improvement of school environments in the ways discussed in the previous three chapters by improving visual aesthetics, creating a sense of place, and contributing to pleasant aesthetics that affect all other senses. Beyond these contributions, increasing student exposure to nature at school has a myriad of other benefits for civic education and the development of democratic civic virtues. In this chapter I provide the following examples for how such a natural aesthetic can be enhanced in schools:

- A variety of vegetation, building materials, and terrain, creating mini-worlds of diversity.
- Flora that reflect seasonal changes.
- Abundant landscapes that encourage children to pick-things and to actively engage.
- Textures, colors, and aromas, as well as both edible and in-edible plants.
- Student-built and tended gardens.
- A purposefully created sense-of-place.
- Nature within school buildings: through natural light, access to outside air, fountains, potted plants, and seasonal items brought into the classroom, such as flowers, grasses, or pumpkin.

MONTESSORI SCHOOLS, REGGIO EMILIA SCHOOLS, AND WALDORF SCHOOLS

Many of the photographs I use of examples demonstrating how my suggestions can be implemented in schools are from Montessori schools, Reggio Emilia schools, and Waldorf schools. While these three schools vary greatly in aspects of their educational philosophy and pedagogy, they all recognize the importance of beautiful school aesthetics and natural environments for the development and education of children. They all believe that children learn from and are affected by their interactions with the environment, so much so that they think of the school environment as an important educator. The following descriptions of these three types of educational environments display the characteristics they share with the suggestions I make in the next three chapters, as well as pointing to the ways they differ from my thesis.

In the words of The American Montessori Society: In Montessori schools, classrooms are beautiful, inviting, and thoughtfully arranged. They contain natural lighting, soft colors, and uncluttered spaces for activity that is focused and calm. Learning materials are displayed on accessible shelves, fostering independence as students go about their work. Everything is where it is supposed to be, conveying a sense of harmony and order that both comforts and inspires. Walls are unlikely to be papered with brightly colored images of cartoons and syndicated characters. Rather, you might see posters from a local museum, or framed photographs or paintings created by the students themselves.

Each classroom is uniquely suited to the needs of its students. Preschool rooms feature low sinks, chairs, and tables; a reading corner with a small couch (or comfy floor cushions); reachable shelves; and child-sized kitchen tools—elements that allow independence and help develop small motor skills. In upper-level classrooms you are likely to see large tables for group work, computers, interactive whiteboards, and areas for science labs. Above all, each classroom is warm, well-organized, and inviting, with couches, rugs, and flowers to help children and youth feel calm and at home. Students work together as stewards of their environment. They take turns caring for classroom pets and plants; do their part to maintain order, such as by returning materials to the shelves after use; and help keep outdoor spaces groomed and litter-free. The classrooms are consciously designed in order to develop within children the skills and inclinations they need in order to live in community, to learn independently, and to think constructively and creatively⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ <http://amshq.org/Montessori-Education/Introduction-to-Montessori/Montessori-Classrooms.aspx>.



Photograph 19: Montessori classroom with child-sized furniture, open space for productive work and community-building, a unified aesthetic, wooden furniture, and ample natural light and views.

This description of Montessori schools, as well as the image above and those that are used throughout the next three chapters, emphasize many aesthetics aspects of Montessori school environments that I advocate for the development of democratic civic virtues: They are artistic, utilizing famous pieces of artwork as well as displaying student work; they are beautiful, avoiding bright colors and harsh images in favor of soft colors, uncluttered spaces, order, harmony, organization, and warmth; they incorporate nature with natural lighting, natural play materials, and flowers, and they create a home-like aesthetic by using comfortable furniture that fits the children, accessible materials to encourage engagement and independence, and by making the environment generally comfortable and inviting. In these ways Montessori schools provide an example of schools that already afford students the types of aesthetics I suggest for the improvement of civic education.

Similarly, in describing Reggio Emilia classrooms, The Reggio Alliance says,

The environment is viewed as the third teacher, with the power to provoke curiosity and learning, and encourage interaction. The elements of light, transparency and natural materials are strongly valued. You will not find commercial posters and plastic furniture bought from catalogs. What you will find is documentation of the learning experiences and interactions of the children, teachers and families as well as evidence of the identity of the community where the center or school is located⁴⁵.

In “The Third Teacher” Margie Carter (2007) explains that in Reggio Emilia schools, “If we are to embrace the idea of the environment as a significant Educator we must expand our thinking beyond the notion of room arrangements and rating scales. We must ask ourselves what values we want to communicate through our environments and how we want children to experience their time in our programs” (p. 22). She suggests that everyone involved with schools “walk down the halls and into the classrooms, [asking:] What does this environment ‘teach’ those who are in it? How is it shaping the identity of those who spend long days there” (p. 22)?

⁴⁵ <https://www.reggioalliance.org/faq.php#environment>.



Photograph 20: Reggio Emilia classroom with natural light, seasonal displays, natural materials, displays of student work, and orderly storage.

This description indicates how Reggio Emilia schools think about the aesthetics of their educational environments. As can be seen in the image above, as well as in the images used throughout the next three chapters, Reggio Emilia schools incorporate many of the suggestions in this dissertation: They recognize and prioritize the importance of the identity of the school and the community in which it is located; they display student work; they do not use commercial plastic furniture or posters, but instead create a more individual and beautiful aesthetic; they incorporate light, and natural objects as well as connecting inner and outer spaces with transparent materials; and they utilize all five senses in order to increase student awareness, engagement, and expression. In these ways, Reggio Emilia schools provide an example of school environments that are currently incorporating many of the aesthetic suggestions I make in the following chapters.

Waldorf Schools also create similar classroom environments and have the same purposeful intention. The International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education describes Waldorf classrooms as “warm, beautiful and loving home-like environment, which [are] protective and secure, and where things happen in a predictable, rhythmic manner...When toys are used, they are made of natural materials. Wood, cotton, wool, silk, shells, stones, pine cones and objects from nature that the children themselves have collected are used in play and to beautify the room.⁴⁶” The European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education also recognizing these defining elements of Waldorf Schools:

- Whole class teaching in aesthetically pleasing and secure learning environment where qualities of childhood are nurtured and respected.
- Children based in their own home classroom except for specialist areas⁴⁷.

Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf Schools confirms that the “‘Physical environment’ must be understood in the widest sense imaginable. It includes not just what happens around children in the material sense, but everything that occurs in their environment, everything that can be perceived by their senses, that can work on the inner powers of children from the surrounding physical space” (Howard, 2013, p.2).

⁴⁶ http://www.iaswece.org/waldorf_education/what_is.aspx.

⁴⁷ <http://www.ecswe.org/steinercharacteristics.php>.



Photograph 21: Waldorf classroom with wooden furniture, artistic teacher drawn chalkboard drawing, soft materials, natural light, and a simple unified aesthetic.

Waldorf schools provide another example of current school environments that emphasize and utilize many of the suggestions I make in the next three sections: They emphasize beauty and strive to make every aspect of the school and campus beautiful, warm, and delightful; they use natural toys and materials for furniture and classroom adornment; and they recognize that everything that can be perceived by children's senses will have a developmental effect on students.

Although the learning environments in Waldorf, Montessori, and Reggio Emilia schools were each created in the early to mid 1900's, current research confirms that they were correct in their fundamental understanding of the importance of the aesthetics of school environments. All three of these schools provide beautiful, intentionally created, calming, and orderly grounds, schools, and classrooms, which inspire community, care, engagement, participation, expression, communication, and awareness. They each provide an example of how beautiful and artistic environmental aesthetics can be

employed within current schools today. However, these beautiful educational environments are currently relegated to alternative, private forms of education, available only to a small number of our country's citizens, and most often only to the wealthy. In contrast to this, my thesis asserts that all children deserve, and all healthy democratic citizens require, beautiful learning environments, similar to these, in order to support their development of democratic civic virtues.

The approach of Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and Waldorf schools also differ from my thesis because they do not explicitly recognize or advocate the role their school aesthetics are playing in the development of democratic civic virtues in students. Like so many programs that implement aesthetics and activities similar to my suggestions – some of which will be discussed in the following chapters – they fail to make their contributions to the development of democratic civic virtues an explicit, clear, and important mission of their efforts. This lack of awareness and publicity decrease potential support for their programs, minimizes the beneficial civic effects of their work, and misses the opportunity to create greater awareness of the connection between learning environments and the development of democratic behaviors, skills, and dispositions. Consequently, while Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and Waldorf schools provide many great aesthetic examples of the types of environments I advocate for public schools, the origins of these environments, the pedagogical philosophies to which they are tied, and the explicit reasons for their creations are not the same as those for which I argue.

INSPIRING SUGGESTIONS – NOT RIDGED PRESCRIPTIONS

In Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10, I provide concrete suggestions for designing, creating, and improving school environments for the improvement of civic education, but these suggestions are just that – suggestions. They are meant to awaken the reader’s senses to his or her own environment and engage him or her in thinking about how to contribute positively to the aesthetics of the schools in his or her community. The most important prescription is that every teacher, student, and parent has the freedom to contribute in a meaningful way to the creation and maintenance of the aesthetic environment of their classroom and school. I purposefully refrain from giving standardized criteria that can be unthinkingly followed.

I believe that a healthy and successful democracy cannot afford to let its educational environments be created haphazardly or only for utilitarian purposes, nor can a democracy afford to standardize, and thus kill the democratic spirit – i.e. the creative, participatory, self-directed spirit – of its school environments. It cannot afford to have the aesthetics of its school environments be determined by chance or through a hierarchic process that strips the power and involvement from the individuals within each school community. As a result, what follows contains both big and small suggestions, applicable for building new schools, renovating old ones, and transforming schools that are not making any large-scale changes. Throughout the discussion, it should remain clear that even “small acts of beauty can change the nature and experience of the built environment” (Upitis, 2010, p. 1). Parents and teachers working together with the

students can significantly improve the aesthetics of their school environments, thereby enhancing the development of democratic civic virtues, even if resources and large-scale support are limited.

While, in the next three chapters, I do connect the development of civic virtues to school aesthetics through empirical research, I do not attempt to give a specific, prescribed method of design to foster this development. A significant part of my thesis is that the consciousness of, and participation in creating and maintaining, beautiful school aesthetics – by each member of a school community – is itself one of the most important tools for the development of democratic civic virtues. While this dissertation is filled with examples, from research, of ways to develop civic virtue through conscious school design, these examples are meant to awaken and inspire the reader, not to strictly define or direct a uniform design and aesthetic. I am purposefully trying to walk a thin line between encouraging wide-spread, individual engagement and creativity and advocating specific aesthetic qualities and characteristics that have been shown to correlate with the development of democratic civic virtues.

While there are some enduring principles that come from the empirical research, which should help to tailor our visions and creations – such as the incorporation of nature, ample lighting, and quite acoustics – it is my hope that these principles expand our perspective of what we can create within our schools, and do not limit our options or make our creativity less vivid and inspired. I have argued that the aesthetic elements of each school should be largely determined by the active engagement and creativity of the

members of each school community. Warmth, beauty, unique expression, and other important characteristics similar to these, are open-ended principles and they require individual judgment, evaluation, contribution, and creativity. How each school is made beautiful, warm, expressive, and unique should vary greatly from school to school, because the development of individual expression, communication, and creativity – among many other important democratic virtues – cannot be prescribed or achieved by a definitive set of standards.⁴⁸

Readers might object that in the following chapters my suggestions amount to nothing more than an explication of my personal aesthetic preferences. In part, this is an accurate observation: the specific images I use as examples in this dissertation are determined by my aesthetic preferences. Each image I use to represent a suggestion is chosen using my own aesthetic sense. Each example of beautiful, ordered, natural, inspiring, or artistic school environments – among other examples – is chosen based on what I find to be beautiful, ordered, natural, inspiring, or artistic. However, this is not a

⁴⁸ Much of the writing currently done on improving educational environments, either explicitly or implicitly, advocates progressive educational pedagogies. (See for example: Taylor, 2009) This pedagogical bend will understandably make some educators wary of the insights offered in these writings. This is unfortunate, because the insights Taylor and other writers and researchers offer on the effects and importance of educational environments are relevant, important for, and applicable to all schools – regardless of their pedagogy. Almost by its very definition, a democracy is ensured a variety of views on what the best educational methods are; not only is this unavoidable, within a democracy it should be celebrated and encouraged. What is essential for a healthy democracy is not that we all agree in our judgments and values, but that we are all committed to actively participating in, and engaged in contributing to, communities that can be defined by their conscious, intentional, purposeful creation and maintenance. As I emphasized previously, bringing consciousness to how and why the aesthetics of an educational environment are created and maintained is essential for ensuring that the lessons taught by these environments are the ones we want to be taught. Bringing awareness to the aesthetics of the school environment and enabling the individuals within the school community to improve them, for the purpose of developing democratic civic virtues, will be integral in achieving a healthy democracy.

failing but rather an example of what I urge every citizen to do. Ideally each citizen will be involved in contributing their personal, subjective aesthetic evaluation, opinions, and preferences to creating beautiful, artistic, inspiring schools in their communities. School environments based on the collaborative work and aesthetic tastes of the particular individuals within their community will each have a unique and special aesthetic that represents the engagement, participation, and active determinacy of the individuals and community that makes up each school; and this is as it should be.

Recollect that in Chapter 1, and again in Chapter 5, I demonstrated that democracy itself is context sensitive, problematic, and a matter of degree, indicating that successful civic education programs should share the same characteristics. Improvement of civic education by increasing the beauty and artistry of school aesthetics, and through student participation in their development and maintenance, will exhibit these traits if these improvements are made through the cooperative efforts of individuals who each contribute their own aesthetic values, preferences, and opinions. Schools designed and adorned in this way will vary depending on their community and the make-up of their student body; hence, they will be context sensitive. Such schools will also respond to problems as they emerge, with attention and effort contributed to the greatest problems, as identified by the individuals within the community. Further, these schools will be continual works in progress, their artistry and beautification always a matter of degree, never perfected or lacking further opportunities for improvement and growth.

In Chapter 2, I argue that civic virtues should be viewed as context sensitive but not as relativistic. I make a similar argument here – almost word for word – in regard to the aesthetics of school environments. I suggest that so long as the members of democratic communities recognize the importance of school environments to the development of democratic civic virtues, it does not matter that every citizen, or every school community within a democratic society, agrees on, or works toward fostering the exact same aesthetics. This does not mean that all aesthetics and characteristics of school environments are equal, nor should it encourage a kind of relativism that leads citizens to shy away from disagreement, tough conversations, and engaged opinions, which can lead to unconscious, meaningless lives, schools, and policies. Rather, urging that not everyone must agree on the same list of school aesthetics is meant to foster a society where impassioned individuals take environmental aesthetics seriously and each carefully consider for themselves and their own immediate communities how best to create beautiful, inspiring environments that contribute to improved civic education and a healthy democracy.

GENERAL OBJECTIONS

In this dissertation, I argue that the aesthetics of a school environment are the direct consequence of the care, awareness, active determinacy, and freedom (or lack thereof) of the people who work and learn within it. I anticipate many readers, especially those who work in impoverished school districts, will protest that the poor aesthetics of

their school environments are the consequence of inadequate funding and not a lack of care or engagement by teachers, staff, or students. While I recognize that it is easy for affluent school districts to provide new facilities, beautiful landscaping, and adequate maintenance, while impoverished districts often lack the funding to provide even essential learning materials, what I am arguing for is slightly different. I am not arguing for school districts – whether they are financially able or not – to blindly throw money at their facilities. Rather, I am arguing for a shift in perspective and awareness, which is possible in schools that are struggling financially as well as in those that are financially well off.

I am arguing for a growing awareness to develop of the importance of our school environments, and for an emerging belief in those involved with schools that they – each as individuals and even more so collaboratively together – can and should make a difference through their awareness, engagement, and care of the physical school environment. Each individual has the potential to contribute beauty, order, and cleanliness to every environment he or she inhabits. And, if a group of members within a school community became committed to improving their school’s aesthetics – even in small ways that require little or no financial resources⁴⁹ – they could begin to create substantial and civically significant changes within their schools. Especially in impoverished areas, students need to be taught to be resourceful. They need to experience the truth upon which America attempts to build itself: individuals with a desire and a

⁴⁹ Such as picking up trash, pushing in chairs, and de-cluttering learning spaces.

vision can create change, can improve their environments, and can create a future worthy of work and care.

It will require another project to explore the potential options available for attaining the participation and financial support needed to make some of the changes in school aesthetics that I suggest and that students or teachers may identify as important. Attaining necessary financial support is an important part of being able to put many of my suggestions into practice, and worthy of much work and thought. However, within this dissertation, these practical elements will be left for further thought and exploration at a later time. First, inspiration, motivation, and a desire to make our schools better environments for the learning and practicing of civic virtues – through the creation of order, cleanliness, artistry, inspiration, and beauty – must be achieved. It is these impetuses that I attempt to awaken and foster throughout the dissertation.

Others might object that although time, work, and resources may be available, there are programs or aspects of school that are more important or more deserving of this effort: In other words, the argument might be made, that the environment of schools are less important than other concerns competing for funding, time, and attention. This is a legitimate concern and it must be raised and evaluated in each school community. However, until education experts, administrators, and the general populous gain awareness of the significant impact school environments can have on student development and civic education a fair evaluation cannot be made. While an engaged, participatory, and motivated community may decide that their school has greater

problems – that require all available resources, time, and effort – than the improvement of their civic education programs, it seems unlikely that such a worthy goal would not rank highly among required improvements and expenditures. In any case, before the citizenry in any particular school community can decide this question, they must first become aware of the research and arguments I present in this dissertation.

CONCLUSION

If our school environments are not environments we love to be in, then they are not the best places to be raising and growing our children, because children can be strongly influenced by their environment. The first step in making the changes I propose is that each person stop long enough to become aware of the aesthetics of the school environments in their communities. Once this shift happens, you won't be able to drive past another school ringed by ugly chain-link fences, without hearing and seeing the undemocratic messages it is sending. If you gain nothing else from reading this dissertation, I hope it inspires you to pay attention. Your aesthetic impulses and preferences matter. If you don't like being in our country's schools, then this is a good indication that they are not beneficial environments for raising the democratic citizens upon which our country depends.

Within this dissertation, I am encouraging a personal sense of power – your awareness, preferences, and sense of what is and is not beautiful matters and can be the impetus for the creation of a better educational environment. Although we will not all

agree, all the time, on what is and is not beautiful, the effort and desire to create beauty and order in our schools for the improvement of civic education, can, nonetheless, become a unifying and inspiring goal – despite the differences – which fortifies and enlivens our democracy. If enough people shift their perspective and recognize the importance of school aesthetics, we can begin to manifest the changes I suggest, in all of our schools, for the benefit of our citizens and the health of our democracy. The following four chapters offer many specific suggestions and examples – all supported by empirical research – for how, specifically, school environments can be used to improve civic education in American schools.

“We need to cultivate a sense of pride and stewardship for our schools; Think of the constant collective upkeep of a ship by its crew, including painting, sanding, repairing, washing, and polishing. If we did this with our schools, they would be beautiful places in which to learn” (Taylor, 2008, p. 395). And not only would these beautiful places be environments that promote democratic civic virtue, the very acts involved in continually creating and recreating the school environments would themselves strengthen the school community and, through the routine activity, build democratic civic virtues within each contributing student, teacher, and parent.

Chapter 7: Visual Aesthetics: Inside Schools

“A sense of aesthetics humanizes spaces and stimulates learning, studying and socializing experiences. Being in a beautiful space rather than an ugly space enhances a student's performance.”

– J. Rydeen (2009)

In her work, Rena Uptis (2010), Professor of Education at Queen’s University, has seen that children “...demonstrated an intuitive sense of beauty, an innate ability to read and respond to the environment. This love of beauty made [her] start to wonder how these children and others must feel, sitting shut away from the world for eighteen or more years in dull, cluttered, and featureless nine-hundred-square-foot classrooms learning mostly from textbooks” (p.75). In contrast to these dull, cluttered, featureless classrooms, Uptis saw, first hand, how beautiful architecture and warm, inspiring environments can contribute to the achievement and development of her students. The students at Hennigan School – an inner city school in Boston – began performing in the theater at MIT, once a year, and Uptis found that,

The students did not trash the place. In fact, they reacted to the architecture with reverence and awe. As we walked through the doors of the theatre, there was hushed silence. A few of the children sat on the plush indigo chairs, carefully pulling down the seats before gingerly taking their places. ...There was no question that this was a *real* theater. And there was no question that being in a real theatre meant the students were involved in a real musical: a musical of value. And – at least for those few golden days – the work they did was therefore also of value. ... The musical was astonishing. The students performed at a level far beyond what I had taught them. Most important of all, the building inspired them. The building supported their work, and in that way, the building was one of their teachers too. (pp. 3-4)

This example demonstrates how beauty within the environment can induce care, and the valuing of space, self, community, and work, virtues which would otherwise be unlikely to emerge. Students who are regularly told by their environments that both they and their

work are of value are likely to take themselves and their work more seriously, and in the future strive to build and create situations and environments that continue fostering these virtues.

As Steiner (1997) said,

What a pity that we take our children into schoolrooms where they meet with the most barbaric surroundings for their young souls! You need only imagine how it would be for children to [instead] learn their times tables in classrooms that were...decorated by an artist so that everything the eye fell upon was in harmony.” (p. 176)

Through the use of characteristics that are pleasing to students’ five senses, classrooms and schools can and should be made as beautiful as possible. However, while beauty has many beneficial promises it is also highly problematic, especially when trying to provide empirical evidence of its benefits and suggestions for its creation in public spaces. The first problem with beauty is that it is difficult to define and understand. It is difficult even to identify what contributes to aesthetic appreciation within one person and aesthetic judgments are known to vary between different individuals as well. Some studies show that aspects such as symmetry and complexity of objects effect aesthetic judgment (Eisenman, 1967; Berlyne, 1970; Jacobsen and Hofel, 2002). Berlyne’s work (1971, 1974) shows that aesthetic appreciation rests on diverse psychological processes including pleasure, expectation, surprise, recognition, and interest. And additionally, the social, historical, cultural, biological, educational, and personality variables between individuals can also contribute to differences in identification and appreciation of beauty. All of these factors add to the difficulty of identifying a characteristic of school

environments, like beauty, and suggesting that it can be created within schools in such a way as to contribute to the improvement of education.

It is also difficult to measure the isolated effects of something as complex as beauty, even if it could be identified and agreed upon. For example, if beautiful school environments do contribute to the development of democratic civic virtues in students, then there should be evidence that students who attend beautiful schools have well-developed civic virtues, while students who attend ugly schools should be found to have poorly-developed civic virtues. A recent survey of Waldorf graduates provides an example that shows evidence of a correlation between beautiful school aesthetics and the development of civic virtues. It also highlights some of the difficulty involved in gaining such evidence.

Waldorf schools intentionally create beautiful aesthetics in their classrooms and on their campuses. Waldorf schools also integrate an artistic approach to all subject matters and include many high arts as well as practical arts in their curriculum, such as wood-carving, knitting, blacksmithing, painting, dance, acting, and music. A study conducted through surveys of Waldorf graduates from 1943 – 2004 found the following evidence of the development of civic virtues within Waldorf graduates:

- Waldorf graduates place a high level of importance on activities leading to personal growth and social well-being.
- Graduates consider themselves to be “citizens of the world” and are particularly interested in global developments.

- Graduates believe Waldorf education was crucial in their self-development and social-wakefulness, as well as their creative capacities, self-expression, and exploration of different viewpoints⁵⁰.

While this survey reveals the high evaluation of civic virtues such as personal development and social well-being by Waldorf graduates, as well as the belief that their Waldorf education provided development in important civic virtues, such as creativity, self-express, and tolerance, it is impossible to know whether these benefits should be attributed to the beautiful aesthetics of Waldorf schools, rather than to other elements of the curriculum, social environment, or socio-economic background of the students. Such loose evidence of correlation between beautiful schools and the development of civic virtues, while heartening to those who believe in the connection, does little to robustly demonstrate the connection or to isolate the important contributing factors of the physical environment for replication elsewhere. Even with a better-designed study, which does not rely upon the self-reporting of graduates, these same confounding complexities would make it difficult to achieve clear and adequate results⁵¹.

⁵⁰ Research on Waldorf Graduates in North America: Phase II abstract.
<http://www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org/research-from-waldorf-education/>.

⁵¹ It is also important to note that there are instances of individuals or cultures who grew up in beautiful environments but who ended up doing truly horrible things, as well as examples of individuals and groups of people who developed in terrible, deficient environments but went on to produce amazing works of art, contribute to humanitarian causes, or develop improved conditions for their people. These examples make it important to explicitly recognize the limitations of my thesis: There is not a one-to-one correlation between beautiful educational environments and the development of successful, healthy democratic citizens. Rather, the aesthetics of school environments are one of *many* important factors that can contribute to the development of democratic civic virtues.

I am not claiming that beautiful environments create good people and ugly environments create bad people. Rather, beautiful environments make it easier to express oneself, communicate, develop association, and maintain awareness of the connection between oneself and others; beautiful environments

The same difficulty exists even in achieving evidence of causal relationships between school environments generally and their effects on student development.

Given the level of interaction between people and their environments and other confounding factors, establishing cause-and-effect relationships between an attribute of a school building and its effect on students, teachers, and staff is difficult. The effects of the built environment will necessarily appear to be small, given the number of variables (Bosch, 2004). Empirical measures do not, however, necessarily capture all relevant considerations that should be applied when evaluating research results. Qualitative aspects of the environment are also important, [and] there is value in attempting to identify design features and building processes and practices that may lead to improvement in learning, health, and productivity for students, teachers, and other school staff, even if empirical results are less than robust. (Sanoff & Waldon, 1994, p. 285)

Even if direct causal relationships between the environment and student development cannot be proven, belief in a correlation between school aesthetics and student achievement and behavior should not be abandoned – nor the pursuit of beneficial design features left un-followed – for as Buckley, Schneider, and Shang write: “While we do not have the data to identify the specific mechanisms by which [school environment] is linked to educational outcomes, from existing research, we know that school buildings in poor shape lead to reduced learning. We also know that poorly managed schools lead to poor achievement,” (2004, p.5). Hence, even though robust research on the causal connection between the aesthetics of school environments and the development of civic virtues is lacking, this absence should not limit the relevance of experienced connection

encourage this kind of behavior and over time can help to develop these positive habits of interaction. Likewise, ugly, dirty environments, in disrepair, are likely to increase student stress, and thus to encourage anti-social, aggressive, uncooperative, and unaware behavior. Over time, such environments are likely to contribute to the habituation of these negative behaviors and interactions. In this way, the built environment – especially of our educational facilities – influences, but does not solely determine, student development.

and identified correlation between school environments and behavior, development, and outcome.

A lack of causal mechanism has not stopped the fields of environmental aesthetics and psychology, and their resulting research, from expanding. These now well-defined fields of study have produced research correlating the effects of physical school environments with diverse developmental outcomes, such as: academic performance (Linneweber, 1996, p. 386; Gifford, 2007) as measured by standardized tests (Earthman, 1999; Earthman & Lemasters, 1996), behavioral problems, drop-out rates, and vandalism (Pablant and Baxter, 1975; Klockhause & Habermann-Morbey, 1986), among others. There is also a large amount of research on specific, isolated aspects of environments – such as lighting, furniture-scale, and color usage – that show correlation to occupants’ development and behavior⁵². However, speaking of research involving the effects of beauty and pleasurable school environment, Cherenfant (2013) says:

Aesthetics in classrooms involve anything that relates to beauty and pleasure to improve students’ attitudes toward learning. While there are not many studies done on its effect on students, it is arguable that incorporating aesthetics in classroom design can play a role in students’ performances. Rydeen (2009) wrote in his article that “A sense of aesthetics humanizes spaces and stimulates learning, studying and socializing experiences. Being in a beautiful space rather than an ugly space enhances a student's performance” (para.15). The beauty of a classroom can make it more attractive and comfortable for a student to learn. The purpose of an attractive classroom is to bring a homelike atmosphere to students and also to serve as another leaning stimulator. As Terrell (2009) said, decorated

⁵² This research is an example of the many ways educational facilities have been shown to affect students. In this dissertation there is much research on the effects of environments on behavior that I do not address, nor do I discuss many reasons beyond the development of democratic civic virtues, for the improvement of school aesthetics and design. However, as briefly indicated here, there are many additional reasons beyond the development of democratic civic virtues – such as improved academics and improved health – to implement these environmental improvements.

classrooms create a good atmosphere for students as well as a discernible way for students to learn. [However] there is a lack of study done precisely on understanding the students' perception of aesthetics involving the items that contribute to the beauty of the classrooms. (p. 3)

Unfortunately, as Cherenfant indicates, and my research confirms, not only is research on the effects of beauty and pleasurable aesthetics difficult to conduct, also very little of it has been done⁵³.

Since I am interested in showing a correlation between beautiful school aesthetics and the development of democratic civic virtues, but there is very little reliable research on the subject, I appeal to educational, psychological, and design literature for suggestions of how to make school environments beautiful and aesthetically pleasing. Using these suggestions as examples for creating beautiful school aesthetics, I present research indicating a connection or correlation between these individual aspects of the physical environment and the development of characteristics identified in Chapter 2 as examples of essential democratic civic virtues. In this way, I provide specific examples of, and evidence for, the use of school aesthetics to improve civic education through the development of democratic civic virtues.

There are, however, reasons to believe that the beauty or overall aesthetics of a space is a holistic impression perceived before, and perhaps in addition to, the individual environmental aspects that contribute to it. In other words, the aesthetic judgment of a space may involve more than the sum of its parts (Goldstone, 1998). This possibility

⁵³ See Maslow and Mintz (1956) and Mintz (1956) for the seminal research on this topic. Also see Locasso (1992) for questions about the methodology and conclusions reached by these studies.

makes it important for further research specifically on the effects of beauty and pleasant environmental aesthetics to be carefully constructed and carried out⁵⁴. While my approach of discussing the behavioral effects of individual aspects of school environments will not address the potential role of this holistic impression, I hope it will provide enough evidence to convince readers that the aesthetics of school environments are important, have significant developmental and behavioral effects, and could be used effectively for the improvement of civic education in American public schools.

The examples of school aesthetics I discuss in the rest of this chapter, and the following chapters, showing their correlation to the development of democratic civic virtues and their contributions to creating successful civic education programs, are listed below in five categories, based on the senses with which students will experience them: sight, hearing, touch, smell or taste. Each characteristic is taken from suggestions for creating beautiful environments, found within the relevant research, and at least one citation for each suggestion is provided below.

⁵⁴ In the conclusion, I make suggestions toward this end.

Sight

Indoors:

- Present relatively empty walls, ample negative space, simplicity, and lack of clutter⁵⁵.
- Emphasize beauty – display famous artwork and artwork created by teachers and student⁵⁶.
- Incorporate color to make the space warm and inviting⁵⁷. Also use color to encourage and define the intended use of space (Moore, 1986).
- Provide adequate lighting, especially ample natural light⁵⁸.
- Create a unified aesthetic⁵⁹.
- Supply orderly, neat storage (Maxwell, 2003).
- Use soft materials to increase warmth and comfort of the space (Upitis, 2010).

Outdoors:

- Create a unique style and visual aesthetic (Kunsteler, 1993).
- Connect buildings and grounds to surrounding ecology, culture and/or history through materials and design (Wheeler, 2004).

⁵⁵ <http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=4de38060-953f-4922-9b9b-1d3bec94400d>

⁵⁶ <http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=4de38060-953f-4922-9b9b-1d3bec94400d>

⁵⁷ <http://jade.marinschools.org/ECE/Documents/Aesthetics.pdf>

⁵⁸ <http://www.wbdg.org/design/ieq.php>

⁵⁹ <http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=4de38060-953f-4922-9b9b-1d3bec94400d>

Hearing

- Control noise level so it is low to moderate⁶⁰.
- Keep reprimands positive in tone and low in volume (O’Leary et al., 1970).
- Use calming music to effect atmosphere (Ziv & Dolev, 2013).

Touch

- Be conscious of materials used in the classroom.
 - Use wooden furniture and toys⁶¹.
 - Use soft, warm, and comfortable materials⁶².
- Control temperature, humidity, and ventilation to provide optimal learning environment⁶³.

Smell and Taste

- Cook healthy foods in schools so experience of pleasant smells and tastes can be maximized⁶⁴ (Pinciotti, 2013).

Rhythm

- Have a consciously rhythmic schedule⁶⁵.
- Assign each class a stable home-room for which they can gain connection and feel responsibility⁶⁶.

⁶⁰ <http://www.wbdg.org/design/ieq.php>

⁶¹ <http://www.ecotoys.com.au/store/wooden-toys.php>

⁶² <http://jade.marinschools.org/ECE/Documents/Aesthetics.pdf>

⁶³ <http://www.wbdg.org/design/ieq.php>

⁶⁴ <http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=4de38060-953f-4922-9b9b-1d3bec94400d>

⁶⁵ http://www.iaswece.org/waldorf_education/what_is.aspx

- Have designated transition areas that facilitate appropriate use of space⁶⁷.
- Celebrate routine festivals⁶⁸.

By discussing these examples of ways American schools can look, sound, feel, smell, and how their food can taste, it becomes clear that these environmental aesthetics can all play a role in successfully cultivating democratic civic virtues within students. For, “[w]hat comes in through our senses – sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste – is...a form of nourishment... [O]ur children are every day bathed in ‘sensory nutrition.’ Some of it is chosen and taken in consciously; much comes in without our being aware of it. Unfortunately, this sensory nutrition is a deeply neglected aspect of the life of the...child” (Blanning, 2013). The sensory nutrition – or lack thereof – provided to our children within our schools is also a deeply neglected aspect of education.

Rarely, for example, do we stop to consider whether the daily barrage of background noise within schools encourages the development of democratic civic virtue or whether it increases anti-social behavior. While teachers may try to make their classrooms pretty or appealing to students, seldom do they ask whether the visual cacophony found within many classrooms encourages engagement, creativity, care, and other democratic civic virtues, or whether it encourages students to shut-down, turn inward, and become unobservant. Similarly, we seldom think about the quality of materials used to make furniture and toys, the taste of lunchroom food, the rhythm of the

⁶⁶ http://www.iaswece.org/waldorf_education/what_is.aspx.

⁶⁷ <http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=4de38060-953f-4922-9b9b-1d3bec94400d>.

⁶⁸ http://www.iaswece.org/waldorf_education/what_is.aspx.

day, or whether beauty is present, as indications of whether or not a school can successfully cultivate democratic civic virtue.

However, “we cannot choose which colors to see or which sounds to hear. Our sense organs are ‘on’ all the time. We cannot turn off our hearing, or smelling, or taste” (Blanning, 2013), and neither can our children. The fact that our sense organs are on all the time makes the aesthetics of the environment children are exposed to while at school integral to the type of education and development they can achieve. If students are going to develop and practice democratic civic virtues within school, then school environments conducive to this development will greatly improve the chances of success⁶⁹.

One of the first things most people consciously notice about an environment is its visual aesthetic: the colors, the layout, how pretty it is, whether it is clean or dirty, etc. In addition to these aspects making a conscious impression, as I discuss in Chapter 4, The Broken Window Theory explains that it is also actually easier to behave well in beautiful, clean, well-ordered environments. In addition to this, in *The Growth of the mind: And the Endangered Origins of Intelligence*, Greenspan and Benderly explain that,

[N]ew research into infant development, neuroscience, and clinical work reveals links between affects and intellect, and that early experiences influence the structure of the brain itselfIn general, during the formative years there is a sensitive interaction between genetic proclivities and environmental experience. Experience appears to adapt the infant’s biology to his or her environment. (1997, pp. 26-7)

⁶⁹ For research on a wide range of developmental behaviors correlated with aspects of the physical environment, see Evans, Kliewer & Martin, 1991; Gump, 1975; Johnson, Muirhead & Hierlihy, 1993; Moore, 1986, 1987; NICHD, 1995; Phillips, 1987; Prescott & David, 1976.

Although less significant than during infancy, the effect of the environment on the brain, behavior, and the development of civic virtues, continues throughout our lives. Greenspan goes on to ask, “How does it affect the development of a child’s mind to spend years in dull, impersonal, poorly designed environments that support passive learning” (1997, pp 26-7)? And the answer to this question must be that if children are educated in environments that are cluttered, disorganized, ugly, or developmentally inappropriate, their brains, behavior, and abilities to develop civic virtue, among other things, will be compromised.

Since one of the main goals of education within a democracy should be the development of democratic civic virtues, the aesthetics of school environments should be such that they support and facilitate this development. In *Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain*, Caine and Caine suggest that, “Relaxed alertness is the desired mental state for learning. Because children absorb the entire context when learning, if the atmosphere is intimidating, the brain/mind of the learner may downshift or basically shut down. The ideal learning state combines a sense of safety with student self-motivation and high challenge (pp. 126-33)” (1991, p. 27). Below, I show that an important part of creating this aesthetic includes what the school-rooms look like, and whether they are beautiful and ordered in such a way that freedom, awareness, care, respect, connection, and integrity – among other democratic civic virtues – can be more easily cultivated.

Uptis explains that Head Start preschool programs have been so well developed within the United States because “[e]vidence suggests that if children lose ground in the

first six years, they will never make it up” (Uptitis, 2010, p. 47). This research specifically references reading, writing, and math, but the same must surely be true with regard to civic virtue; if children lose ground – not only during their first six years, but throughout their schooling – in the cultivation, development, and practice of democratic civic virtues, it seems unlikely that they will ever be able to make it up. As I discuss above, brain research, social theories like The Broken Window Theory, and research on Character Development all support the notion that we cannot hope to ensure a healthy democracy if a large percentage of our citizens spend most of their early lives within institutions that do not cultivate democratic civic virtues. For, “the school’s physical environment can be a powerful contributor to children’s overall development,” and

Classroom environments can support positive development or contribute to increased disruptive behavior, less positive social interaction, and increased stress levels among preschool and elementary school children (Ahrentzen, Jue, Skorpanich, & Evans, 1982; Moore, 1985, 1994). (Maxwell & Chmielewski, 2008, p. 143)

As I show in what follows, one way to contribute to the improvement of civic education and to help avoid such a travesty in democratic education is to carefully craft the visual school environment so that classrooms are simple, beautiful, colorful, bright, unified, orderly, warm, and comfortable.

Indoors

The typical visual aesthetic within American classrooms is over-crowded, messy, chaotic, and often harsh. “Although we may be accustomed to the visual cacophony of

the typical American classroom (alternatively known as the supermarket effect), such images can be confusing to young learners” (Taylor, 2009, p. 26).



Photographs 22-25: The common visual aesthetic found in American classrooms, a cluttered super-market effect, is chaotic, messy, and overwhelming to the senses.

In these four classrooms, the walls are plastered with posters, letters, numbers, instructions, children’s work, and more. Often these different elements are overlapping and physically competing for space on the wall. Other items such as games, supplies, and tools are stacked haphazardly on shelves, tables, or the floor. Student backpacks and books collect around the desks. There seems to be little rational behind where items go, how they are put away, or whether there is enough room. The colors of the walls and furniture and the color and style of the posters, pictures, and diagrams are harsh – bright

elementary colors, dark out-lines, simplistic forms, cartoon-like characters – and they all crowd together. There is also little natural light and no exposure, through views or indoor plants, to nature. This chaotic, messy, overly-bright overlay of stimulus is overwhelming to the senses.

In contrast to the images above, which share an aesthetic with many current public school classrooms, the images below have aesthetic characteristics that, I explain, are conducive to the development of democratic civic virtues.



Photographs 26: This classroom (and the two below) have a calm, beautiful, uniform aesthetic with relatively little on the walls, soft colors, wooden furniture, artwork, and orderly storage. These aesthetics contribute to the development of democratic civic virtues.



Photographs 27 and 28: These classrooms have a calm, beautiful, uniform aesthetic with relatively little on the walls, soft colors, wooden furniture, artwork, and orderly storage. These aesthetics contribute to the development of democratic civic virtues.

There are specific aesthetics within these classrooms that promote the development of democratic civic virtues: There is very little hanging on the walls; no clutter; adequate negative space around surrounding artwork and information on walls; a warm, soft color covering the wall – they are not stark white or harshly colored; a unified aesthetic – everything matches and looks good together; matching, warm wooden furniture; an orderly and neat storage of supplies and student belongings; a warm, soft light; and the incorporation of soft material, such as carpet and curtains. All of these environmental aspects seem to join together to create an overall sense of calm and beauty. I discuss each suggestion and its relationship to the development of civic virtues below.

SIMPLICITY, NO CLUTTER, AND NEGATIVE SPACE ON WALLS

The first aesthetic these classrooms share are relatively simple and uncluttered walls. When there is little hanging on the walls and nothing piled or stacked around the classroom, the lack of visual clutter helps students to focus their attention on what is

being presented. Chalkboards can become canvases presenting carefully crafted and intentional information.



Photograph 29: Chalkboards surrounded by negative space allow the artwork and lessons on the board to command students' full attention.

The focused attention afforded to students by this relatively Spartan presentation, as compared to traditional classroom aesthetics, encourages full engagement and aids participation. Students can easily infer which content the teacher finds most important and gain an internal sense of the value the teacher places on the lesson through the careful intention used to create and present it. These benefits all encourage student engagement, participation, and focused awareness. When undistracted by unimportant aspects of the environment (clutter and mess) students can develop and practice these virtues – engagement, participation, awareness – necessary for adequate communication and awareness of the connection that lies between individuals and their behaviors. In addition to better understanding and retention of academic materials, developing engagement,

participation, and focused awareness is the development of dispositions that support characteristics identified by Dewey as essential to ideal democracy.

Although less artistic and containing more information than the image above, the images below demonstrate how leaving adequate negative space around information posted on classroom walls can help to make information more accessible and less overwhelming. Such space and placement is likely to result in better engagement, comprehension, and participation, while avoiding the kind of aesthetic overload that can lead children to shutdown or become distracted.



Photographs 31 and 32: Negative space surrounding information and wall-displays allows the information to be more accessible and less overwhelming.



Photograph 32: Negative space surrounding information and wall-displays allows the information to be more accessible and less overwhelming.

As Taylor suggests: “The careful use of negative space to offset positive forms can bring clarity and focus to the learning space,” and “[p]rofessional-quality display offers an alternative to the visual cacophony so prevalent in classrooms today – the ‘visual bombardment of images’ of the typical North American early childhood environment” (2009, pp. 26 and 28). Since democracy requires citizens who are aware of the relationship between themselves and others and the effect their behavior has on others and their surroundings, as well as citizens who can engage and participate in the civic process, simplifying the classroom aesthetic can contribute to the health of our democracy by strengthening, encouraging, and allowing students to practice these essential civic virtues.

ARTWORK ON WALLS

The two images below demonstrate how children’s artwork can be displayed in a professional manner, either easily by framing each picture with a backdrop of colored paper and hanging them with ample space around each picture, or more professionally with glass cases and frames. These presentations allow each piece of artwork to be seen and enjoyed without adding to an overwhelming, cluttered aesthetic.



Photographs 33 and 34: Attractive, “professional” displays of student artwork encourage self-respect, individuality, engagement, participation, creativity, imagination, and active-determination.

This form of presentation also communicates care and appreciation of the creativity and work of the students, likely inducing self-respect, individuality, and an encouragement of further engagement, participation, creativity, imagination, and active-determination. Seeing the work of their fellow students respectfully and artfully displayed is also likely to evoke care and respect of others as well as awareness and connection.

To further encourage the development of these civic virtues, classrooms can also display museum-quality artwork.



Photograph 35: Displays of professional and famous artwork enhance the beneficial aesthetics of classrooms.

One of the benefits of displaying famous works of art in classrooms is the beauty and depth of care and expression found within these works. This beneficial aspect of famous works of art highlights another important aesthetic concern that should be considered in creating learning environments for children. Much of the artwork and images used in children's environments are simplistic, harsh, overly-bright and often created with computers rather than an artist's hand, such as the images below:



Photographs 36 and 37: Examples of common computer-generated images used in children's environments, which are simplistic, harsh, and overly-bright

While these images are joyful and pleasing, they lack emotional depth and expressive complexity. In contrast, the images below have a depth, softness, and seriousness that seem more capable of inspiring care, empathy, and a sympathetic desire to create within children, because the care and intention of the artist is clearly expressed.



Photographs 38 and 39: Examples of hand-painted and -drawn images intended to be beautiful and to inspire care, respect, and connection in students.

These images are less defined, less pre-digested, and less silly, than the first two images, leaving room for students to find the complexity of their own experiences represented in the works of art. The second two images are also clearly intended to be beautiful in a way the first two are not – this beauty speaks to the richest and deepest parts of us and our children – while the first two images seem to have been created with the intention to amuse or entertain. Entertainment may delight us but it cannot inspire care, respect,

connection, and a desire to emulate it with the same strength and depth as beauty. Still true today is Steiner's comment from the early 1900s: "[W]e have unnecessary consumer art along with a barbarically formed living environment" (Steiner, 1997b, p. 177). Unfortunately, this is often especially true of our children's learning environments. In addition to carefully considering the types of images used within the classroom, teachers who routinely provide an example of creativity, by creating beautiful drawings on the chalkboards or hanging their own artwork on the walls, as well as by routinely caring for the aesthetics of the classroom environment, model beneficial civic virtues to the students, such as engagement, participation, creativity, respect, care, active determination, and connection.

Through the careful, respectful display of student artwork, the incorporation of professional art, the careful selection of artistic decorations, and the teacher's example of creation and engagement through her own artwork, the educational environment can support student development of civic virtues, which support all four criteria identified by Dewey as essential for ideal democracy. By encouraging individuality, self-respect, creativity, imagination, and active determination – through professional displays of student work – the student's dispositions to express themselves and their views will be encouraged, supported, and developed. Respect for others, participation, and engagement – all inspired through the prominent display of a student's work and that of his classmates – are dispositions essential for successful communication. Likewise, awareness, caring

for others, and compassion are necessary for associated living and an awareness of the connection that exists between democratic citizens and their choices and behaviors.

The way in which artwork is displayed in a classroom and the type of artwork to which students are regularly exposed will not, in and of itself, automatically turn them into engaged, contributing democratic citizens. However, simple aesthetic aspects of the classroom environment, such as professional displays of student artwork, have the potential to encourage, support, and develop dispositions or ways of being – such as engagement, respect, and creativity – that are likely to become ingrained habits of activity, if they are routinely practiced. And it is these “habits of heart”, as Tocqueville referred to them, or civic virtues, that, once developed, can provide one of the three essential pillars⁷⁰ of adequate civic education.

COLOR

Many schools have spaces defined by stark white walls or walls painted with a dirty grey or dull cream. These colors create harsh, boring, or lifeless environments and they do little to help define the space, create expression, or engender attention and engagement. By adding either rich or soft, beautiful colors, uniform, uninteresting, and depressing classrooms can be transformed into learning environments that inspire, reflect, and contribute to the development of the children within them. The deep, vibrant purple

⁷⁰ As discussed in Chapters 3 and 6, the three pillars of civic education are civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic virtues.

used in the classroom pictured below allows a corner of the classroom to be transformed into a library and comfortable location for quiet study.



Photograph 40: A purple rug and wall help to define a corner of the classroom for reading and quiet study.

In this classroom the color helps to define the space and invite the children to participate in a defined activity. Research has shown that well-defined settings encourage engagement in developmentally supportive activities, exploration, cooperative behavior, and social interactions. In the study “Effects of the Spatial Definition of Behavior Settings on Children’s Behavior: A Quasi-Experimental Field Study” by Gary T. Moore (1986), 14 child care centers were systematically observed and categorized based on their level of spatially well defined behavior settings. Controlling for group differences among subjects in each setting, Moore found that well-defined behavior settings encourage and support these behaviors, or exploration, cooperation, and social engagement, more than moderately or poorly defined settings.

As shown in the lecture space below – created and defined through the use of blended, enlivening colors⁷¹ – adding color to what would otherwise be a blank white expanse of space can help to direct attention, heighten awareness, and create an environment suitable for specific activities. In “The Impact of Color on Learning” Engelbrecht (2003) suggests that monotone colors can cause anxiety, lead to irritability, or an inability to concentrate. In the images below, what could have been an uninteresting, generic space becomes a wonderfully expressive and inspiring environment with the addition of color:



Photographs 41 and 42: Lazure painting creates depth and variety that transforms an uninteresting, “dead” space into one that is lively, warm, and inspiring.

The effective use of color can also be seen in the images below where color, and specifically a transition from one color to another, transforms what would be cold, dead

⁷¹ This process is called lazure, which is “an unusual, more spiritually oriented painting technique, separate from sponging, ragging and typical glazing is the Lazure technique. Color is a vital consideration in 'tuning' a room for its intended use...the white surface behind lazure color reflects light back through the layers of glaze making the colors appear to be 'in the space' rather than simply on the wall ... The combined colors in the lazure method weave an enlivening variety for the human eye and Spirit. Never intruding, always inviting, the colors interplay with the subtle nuances of Nature, creating a depth not normally present on most interior walls” (Lennon, 1997, p. 178).

spaces into lively, warm, inspiring spaces, encouraging transition and an effective use of the space.



Photographs 43-45: The use of color in hallways and entryways can encourage movement and capture the transitional use of the space.

The use of color in the hallways and entryway, shown above, encourages the movement usually found within these spaces, and expresses the transitional use in a vibrant and engaging way that is likely to capture student's attention and awaken them to their environment (Pile, 1997, p. 174). This awareness of the environment and engagement with it can also provide a step toward helping students become aware of their own activities and behaviors within these spaces and the relationship between their actions and those of others. In a dull or ugly hallway this awareness is more difficult to develop because children are encouraged to shut down and become unobservant, by the aesthetics of the space; however, when children are enlivened and awakened by their environment, it is easier for them also to become aware of their own behavior and responsibilities.

The following entryway to the International School of Boston, provides another example of how color can be used in a simple and effective way to transform a school's entrance and make a strong impression on all who pass through it.



Photograph 46: Bright colors on an entryway can transform the experience of entering a school as well as representing important school values.

The bright painting on the door takes what might otherwise be an overbearing entranceway, that says little of the school lying behind it, and transforms it into an entrance that speaks of honored children and cherished community. The colors are bright, lively, and inviting, and the design is full of life and expression, drawing forth potential from all who walk through the door.

Research on color theory and the effects of specific colors and shadings on student behavior and development is lacking and often contradictory. Color and its

precise effects on behavior seems to be another area of study involving numerous complexities and difficulties. However, a study done on the cooperative behavior of pre-school children and the effects of ceiling height and wall color on this behavior found that spaces that were least differentiated were the environments in which children displayed the lowest levels of cooperation. Likewise, the more differentiated the space (including the addition of color) the greater the levels of cooperation displayed by students (Read, Sugawara, & Brandt, 1999). While this research is hardly conclusive, and guidelines for the use of color within schools are incomplete, this research does provide further evidence for thinking that color can play a role in effecting student behavior and development.

As with each of these aesthetic characteristics of school environments, artfully painted walls and an engaging use of color will not produce ideal democratic citizens on its own. However, as the discussion above portrays, considering the use of color within schools can develop and enhance civic virtues important for expression, communication, association, and awareness of connection, each of which was discussed in Chapter 1 as essential for an ideal democracy. By developing the dispositions for engagement, participation, and free exploration students are strengthening the virtues necessary (while not sufficient) for individual expression and successful civic communication. By encouraging and inspiring connection, awareness, civility, and cooperation, color can be used to create a foundation for associated living and an awareness of the connection that exists between citizens. In this way, by developing these internal dispositions and habits

of behavior, color used within school environments can contribute to the improvement of civic education by strengthening student development of civic virtues.

LIGHT



Photographs 47 and 48: Natural light can add warmth and color to a space through the use of gauzy curtains and stained glass.

The light we provide our children in their learning environments matters – it illuminates and colors everything our children are doing and experiencing, and it affects them physically, psychologically, and behaviorally. The two images above show examples of how direct light can be filtered – by gauzy curtains or colored glass – to create warm, calming, natural light in schoolrooms, hallways, and community gathering areas. In contrast to these images of light-filled schools, in a yearlong study, a lack of natural light – for example in classrooms without windows or full-spectrum florescent lighting – was found to contribute to irregular hormonal levels, increased stress

responses, increased absences, and lower growth-rates than children with adequate exposure to natural light (Kuller & Lindsten, 1992). In a similar study, students subjected to cool fluorescent light bulbs for two weeks were found to have increased cortisol levels and greater hyperactive behavior than they had during two weeks under fluorescent day-light tubes (Mayron et al, 1974; Hollwich et al. 1977). These studies show that by disrupting normal hormonal levels and circadian rhythms, children in classrooms lacking natural light and day-light mimicking bulbs are likely to have an irregular production of cortisol and their behaviors – both abilities to concentrate and inclinations to interact socially and cooperate – are likely to be negatively affected.

In classroom environments that disrupt normal hormonal functions, increase stress, and decrease concentration and cooperation, it seems likely that students will have a decreased opportunity to develop and practice important democratic civic virtues. For example, an environment that makes concentration more difficult will also make it harder to develop and practice self-direction, critical mindedness, patience, persistence, participation, and engagement. Similarly, if social interactions are decreased by a lack of appropriate lighting, student connection, compassion, civility, and cooperation seem likely to decrease as well, in addition to fewer opportunities being available for students to learn adaptability and achieve compromise.

While the long lasting effects of inadequate lighting may be small for a short period of time, if students spend years of their lives in such poorly lit environments it seems reasonable to assume that the aggregate loss of opportunity for the development of

important civic virtues will have detrimental effects. By providing classrooms and hallways filled with radiant, rejuvenating, beautiful natural light, the development of democratic civic virtues that support behaviors necessary for democracy can instead be promoted, encouraged, and given a fair opportunity to develop. The spaces pictured below provide further examples of how light can be used to create warm, inviting aesthetics – through ample windows, colored glass, and play areas placed within large window sills – that will not deter the development of democratic civic virtues, and, in this way, can contribute to successful civic education in America’s schools⁷².



Photographs 49 and 50: Natural light can brighten and enhance learning spaces, through color and windowsill play areas.

⁷² Just as removing something from a child’s diet that causes him to get sick is a contribution toward his health – even though this removal does nothing to actively develop health within him – so too is the removal of negative stimuli that make the development of democratic civic virtues unlikely a contribution toward successful civic education – even if this removal does not contribute to the positive development of these virtues itself.

UNIFIED AESTHETIC

Another aesthetic present in classrooms that can obliquely contribute to the development of democratic civic virtues is a unifying theme. For example, the aesthetics in the classrooms on the left, below, look like they belong together, instead of being an unintentional and random amalgamation of different styles.



Photographs 51 and 52: The classroom on the left provides an example of unified aesthetics, whereas the classroom on the right is more chaotic and jumbled.

The classroom on the left has matching tables for the children, green baskets on each table to hold supplies and visually connect the tables to one another, a rug that picks up the color of the cabinets, creating an intentional and unifying visual effect, and clear labels on storage containers clearly denoting where supplies are kept and unify the orderly storage system. Together, these elements create a beautiful, calm, and unified space, which communicates both conscious intention and care. The classroom on the right has many competing colors and aesthetics throughout the room. Yellow cabinets match a few yellow chairs, which pick up some of the wall displays. Other blue chairs match strong blue displays on the walls, and yet other red chairs match one red table.

While bright and potentially stimulating, this classroom, and its contrasting aesthetics, seems likely to create a chaotic and disorganized feel as well as unfocused and sporadic behavior induced by this aesthetic. A greater sense of calm focus and space for student interaction could be achieved in the classroom on the right, by limiting the colors, styles, and stimulus so that a few unifying themes tying the classroom together could instead create an ordered and calm learning environment.



Photographs 53 and 54: The classroom on the left has a calm focus and space for student interactions, facilitated by the ordered, calm, unified learning environment. The classroom on the right is cluttered, providing an amalgamation of chaotic visual stimuli.

The photographs above provide another example of classrooms with unifying aesthetics verses those without. The classroom on the left has unifying aesthetics. There are natural tones used throughout the room. The furniture, floors, and walls all create a warm and simple backdrop for students and their activities. The wooden furniture helps to create a simple, smooth, warm aesthetic that allows other aesthetic elements to stand out without adding the distracting and chaotic visual stimuli created by the composite metal and plastic furniture shown in the picture on the right. While both classrooms are

relatively simple, the one on the left looks inviting and appealing, while the classroom on the right looks busy, bland, and unappealing. Furniture with a simpler aesthetic and a unified color scheme throughout the room – perhaps highlighted with a colored rug – could transform the classroom on the right into a more inviting, appealing, calmer space.

I could not find any studies confirming my observation that a unified aesthetic creates a calmer environment and thus calmer physiological and behavioral responses from students. It appears that such a study has yet to be done. However, I expect that the reader can sense a difference in his or her own reaction to the images above: An intentionally created, unifying aesthetic creates a calmer environment. When the aesthetics go together and create a sense of harmony it also seems likely that students will be less distracted by a cacophony of competing stimuli and will be able to engage with and participate in their environment more easily. In this way, calmer environments would seem to cause less stress in students.

As discussed in Chapter 4, stress inducing environments have been shown to reduce civility, helping, tolerance, connection, caring for others, and compassion, as well as limiting persistence and patience. A chaotic environment that makes focus difficult is also likely to limit opportunities for participation, engagement, self-control, self-direction, and critical mindedness. When the environment is too busy, visually cluttered, or distracting this also seems likely to limit the encouragement and effective expression of creativity, imagination, freedom, and individuality from students. Since democracy requires citizens who are self-directed, expressive, and communicative, as well as caring

for others, and engaged in cooperative and adaptive behaviors of association and connection, educating students in environments that are likely to deter such inclinations and behaviors, and that do not actively develop these beneficial civic virtues, seems, at best, to be counter-productive, and, at worst, to be detrimental to the health of our democracy.

ORDERLY STORAGE

When there is order within a classroom – when trash is in the trashcan instead of spread across the floor and desks; when paintbrushes are hung artistically instead of thrown on a cluttered shelf; when children’s work is displayed in a specific, specially designed location, instead of clumped together with or on top of other wall displays; when student backpacks and coats are hung instead of thrown on the floor, etc. – the space is left available for the current use and needs of the students. As an example of effective, appealing, and orderly storage of supplies and student belongings, the images below show aesthetically pleasing ways to store drinking cups near the water dispenser, coats and backpacks under the windowsill, and paintbrushes artistically against the wall.



Photographs 55 and 56: Ordered storage of student backpacks, drinking cups, and paintbrushes.

Similarly to the effects of a unified aesthetic within classrooms, order allows students to relax, it decreases stress, and it leaves the classroom and tools available and inviting. Students who are relaxed, free of stress, and have access to well-kept and well-cared for learning materials are more likely to be engaged, participatory, and connected to their environment and to the other students and teachers within it. Order helps to prevent the environment from overwhelming students and from taking their energy away from the work and community-building that is so valuable for the development and practice of democratic civic virtue. In research done by Maxwell, he found that,

[School environments not] only communicate to the students the school's values but also the larger society's values as well.... [And] children and young people can articulate how physical attributes of the school environment relate to them. [For example,] one youth noted that he was proud of his classroom because his teacher kept it interesting, neat and clean, "like home". He interpreted this to mean that his teacher cared about her students (Maxwell, 2003). (Killeen, 2003)

As this quote suggests, having an ordered and neat classroom can communicate care and value to students, it also provides an opportunity for students to practice care,

responsibility, self-discipline, persistence, diligence, and self-control, through their contributions to the creation and maintenance of a neat and orderly classroom space.

WARMTH AND SOFT MATERIALS

Beyond the beneficial effects of order, lie the valuable results of including warmth and softness in classrooms. A schoolroom can be de-cluttered, unified, and organize while still being uninviting, cold, and uninspiring. The two classrooms below demonstrate such a harsh and unsupportive aesthetic.



Photographs 57 and 58: Examples of classrooms that are de-cluttered, unified, and organized but that lack warmth and softness.

Uptis says, “In talking with people about schools, I was struck, time and again, by how lay peoples’ responses to school buildings primarily revolved around issues of warmth, balance, and beauty” (Uptis, 2010, p. 177). Unfortunately, as Nair Prakash and Randall Fielding observe, “If we were to assemble a list of adjectives to describe school, *comfortable* would not make the cut” (2007). Cramped spaces, hard furniture, and a rigid structure make classrooms, like the ones pictured above, less than comfortable. Although cleanliness and order can make an environment more appealing and less stressful,

warmth and softness – or the lack there of – has the ability to greatly affect the potential students have for connecting to, caring for, and participating in their school environments. “Aesthetics pertains to a sense of beauty and appeals to human emotion and sensations. Thus, the aesthetic features of a school can cultivate a strong sense of belonging and generate enthusiasm for learning because of the emotional responses of those features (Jarman, Webb, & Chan, 2004)” (Uline et al., 2010). By making our classrooms warm, soft, and inviting, we can create environments that have the ability to inspire and perpetuate care, connection, and a concern for the common good in our children.

Classrooms can be made warm, soft, and inviting, appealing to a home-like aesthetic, by employing soft materials such as curtains, carpet, and draped materials, as in the images below.



Photographs 59 and 60: Classrooms that use soft material, carpets, and curtains to soften and warm the space, creating a comfortable home-like aesthetic.

Couches, large floor pillows, and soft-sided storage units can also contribute to a more comfortable, home-like aesthetic in classrooms, as shown below.



Photographs 61-63: Classrooms with pillows, couches, and soft-sided storage increase warmth and comfort.

As Upitis (2010) observes, “The call for comfortable spaces – for sofas or couches – rings loudly from students in Iceland, in Minnesota, in Germany, and in southeastern Ontario (Davis et al., 2009; Gislason, 2009; Peterson & Upitis, 2009; Upitis

et al., in press)” (p. 166). Beyond using soft and warm materials, making schools comfortable can also be achieved by making the spaces in schools more accessible to children, creating spaces that meet students’ needs for flexible open spaces to congregate and work together in groups, as well as creating more isolated environments supportive of individual concentration and study. Spaces with these characteristics can be created in hallways and other areas of the school, as well as in classrooms, as shown in the image of a comfortable hallway nook below.



Photograph 64: Comfortable sitting areas in school hallways can increase communication and association. Such an increase in usability and comfort is likely to enhance communication and associated living amongst students by physically inviting them to sit together, work together, and use the space in community enhancing ways (Skjaeveland & Garling, 1997). Such spaces, inviting collaboration, are called *sociopetal*, as opposed to *sociofugal* spaces that actively discourages social encounters and interaction (Osmond, 1957).

By encouraging association and communication, comfortable, soft, and warm school environments can increase opportunities for students to develop important

democratic civic virtues. Encouraging communication is likely to create and strengthen connection and respect between students, a capacity for discourse and an ability to give reasons to support one's views, as well as increasing personal integrity, honesty, and self-control, all of which are necessary for successful communication. Spaces designed specifically to engage students in conversation and association are also likely to facilitate an increased care for others, compassion, concern for the common good, and mutual trust among students, as well as providing opportunities for cooperation, compromise, adaptability, generosity, and reliability. These dispositions, so important for healthy democratic citizens, can be encouraged through an environmental design of schools that encourages and provides opportunity for social work and participation, leading to the improvement of an important aspect of civic education.

CONCLUSION

The causal mechanism by which the aspects of the school environments discussed in this chapter can affect student behavior and development is subtle, poorly understood, and its affects often overlooked. However, the outcomes – over time – of schooling in environments containing these suggested aesthetics can be profound. Changing the environment can change behavior. By continuously educating students in environments that encourage and develop democratic civic virtues students can develop habits and ingrained dispositions of civically supportive behavior. Likewise, continuously educating students in environments that encourage anti-democratic behaviors, or that make the

development of civic virtues more challenging, is likely to create habits of behavior and dispositions that are contrary to healthy democratic citizenship.

In the same way that the foundation of a house is usually unseen and unconsidered by those not involved in its construction, but nevertheless essential to the house's structural integrity, civic virtues are the often unnoticed foundations of reliable and consistent civic participation and engagement. Although civic virtues alone cannot create healthy citizenship – just as the foundation of a house cannot provide adequate shelter – all the education possible in civic knowledge and civic skills will not make up for a deficit in civic virtue – just as a house cannot be structurally sound without its foundation. Thus, while aesthetic attention and care in designing school environments will not lead to an accumulation of testable knowledge or skills in students, I argue that they can still play an essential role in achieving successful civic education in American schools.

By paying attention to the visual aesthetic within schools we can intentionally create classrooms that promote the development of democratic civic virtues. By creating classrooms that have very little hanging on the walls; no clutter; adequate negative space around surrounding artwork and information on walls; a warm, soft color covering the wall; a unified aesthetic; matching, warm wooden furniture; orderly, neat storage of supplies and student belongings; warm, soft light; the incorporation of soft material; and an overall sense of calm and beauty, we can contribute to the creation of learning environments that awaken children, increase their awareness, and inspire them to engage

and participate. By educating our children in environments such as these, we can greatly increase their chances of developing the civic virtues necessary for the health and maintenance of our democracy. Scott, Bucholz, and Sheffler (2009) echoes the importance of school aesthetics and directs our attention to questions every American citizen should be asking about our schools: “The classroom environment should do as much to foster cooperation and acceptance as the instructional method the teacher uses. Children are sensitive to the atmosphere created in the classroom” (p. 2). For these reasons, we should each be asking questions of our schools, like the following: “Is the classroom warm and inviting? Are all areas of the classroom accessible to all children? Are the walls bleak and lacking in color or do the decorations help to make the students feel comfortable? Are areas well defined as to their design and purpose” (Scott, Leach, & Bucholz, 2008)?

If it becomes common place to ask such questions of our schools, we can perhaps begin to create school environments that improve the development of civic virtues, thus contributing to a strong foundation on which successful civic participation and engagement can flourish. In addition to developing these democratic civic virtues, the implementation of the aesthetic suggestions in this chapter can also contribute to the improvement of civic education programs by meeting many of the criteria identified in the previous chapters as characteristics of successful civic education:

The aesthetic suggestions in this chapter meet the first characteristic for successful civic education:

- 1) General goals and methods for civic education should be provided but these should be flexible enough that the specifics of each school's needs, values, and inspirations can determine the details of the programs, and so each program can change as needed to address new problems and needs.

As discussed in Chapter 1, a pragmatic orientation toward democracy is the belief that it is context sensitive. This means that what a democracy looks like at any given point and in any given community will vary, sometimes greatly. An appropriate democratic solution, institution, policy, or practice – among other things – in any given situation will depend on the specific social, economic, cultural, and additional details of the circumstance and community. Within a range of general parameters, democracies, their structures, institutions, and policies, can (and often should and will) vary greatly.⁷³ When thinking about the improvement of civic education within America, this point suggests that while there should be general goals and methods shared among all civic education programs, this conception of civic education should be flexible enough to allow the specifics of each program to be determined by the particular needs, values, and inspirations at each school.

The suggestions in this chapter for improving school aesthetics meet this characteristic, they have the ability to provide teachers and schools with concrete goals and methods for improving the development of democratic civic virtues, while, at the same time, leaving the process flexible enough for each school to craft their aesthetics in the way most beneficial for their students and community. Each of the suggestions I give in this chapter – such as simple walls, the use of color, and orderly storage – provides a

⁷³ For further discussion of this point see Macpherson, 1965; Cunningham, 1994; and Savage, 2002, p. 156.

concrete method for enhancing the development of civic virtues in students, however, at the same time, they each leave the details of their implementation up to the teachers, administrators, parents, or students in each school. All the schools within a district, for example, could simplify and unify the aesthetics of their classrooms, while achieving very different overall effects. As another example, the use of color does not demand a uniform aesthetic but allows for vast variation, and encourages continual change and flexibility. Using aesthetics to improve civic education is ideal, in this way, for contributing to evolving civic education programs capable of addressing new problems as they emerge, while also holding a clear ideal for which they can continually strive.

The second characteristic of successful civic education programs, identified previously, is the following:

- 2) Ideals for our civic education programs should be cherished as leading to ever greater improvement. Although perfection should not be the goal, high objectives and standards are still essential to achieve improvement.

As discussed in Chapter 1, a pragmatic orientation to democracy views democracy as a matter of degree with real democracies meeting the criteria identified as essential to an ideal conception of democracy to greater and lesser extents. Laying out the essential, defining elements of democracy, as Dewey does, allows real political communities to have an ideal by which they can define their striving. Without an ideal vision of democracy, it is harder to notice when a political community has policies and practices that do not further its democratic ends. Likewise, laying out an ideal vision of civic education programs, involving specific environmental aesthetics, provides standards

by which to judge real civic education programs, as well as providing an impetus toward improvement and change within schools. Even if the types of suggestions I make are not achieved, this ideal view can provide a motivating and guiding example.

Throughout this chapter, as well as those following, the suggestions provided for improving school aesthetics will not all be applicable, affordable, or achievable by every school. This does not make the suggestions irrelevant. Rather, as indicated by this characteristic, high ideals, objectives, and standards should be valued as inspirational and motivational, even when they cannot be immediately or easily achieved. If the suggestions I am making in this dissertation inspire a changed perspective on the value of the aesthetics of educational environments, then perhaps, one day, motivation, support, and funding for all of these suggestions will be adequately supplied to all schools. However, without understanding their importance or illustrating the possibilities, change is unlikely ever to occur.

The third characteristic for successful civic education programs is the following:

- 3) Civic education should focus on developing behaviors and traits that affect citizens' "ways of life," such that they embody a democratic way of being exemplified by awareness, participation, and engagement, through dispositions necessary for citizens to express themselves, communicate their experiences, live and work in association with others, and be conscious of the connection between their actions and the well-being of others.

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, Dewey identifies these four criteria as essential for ideal democratic citizenship. The first is individual expression – the ability and willingness of individuals to express their thoughts, feelings, judgments, desires, and needs. An ideal democracy is based on the belief that if each individual expresses what he

believes is right and what he thinks he needs in order to live the best life, an appropriate path for the country can be found. This foundation of democracy stems from the notion that individual men – when given the proper environment and tools – can make good judgments as to how they should live collectively and act together. It is based on a pervasive belief in the potential of each individual to contribute positively to society. And it is based on a conviction that the best form of government is one that is guided by the compromises reached between the varied views held and expressed by all individuals within a community. Attempting even an approximation of this ideal requires democratic citizens to develop a robust ability and desire for individual expression.

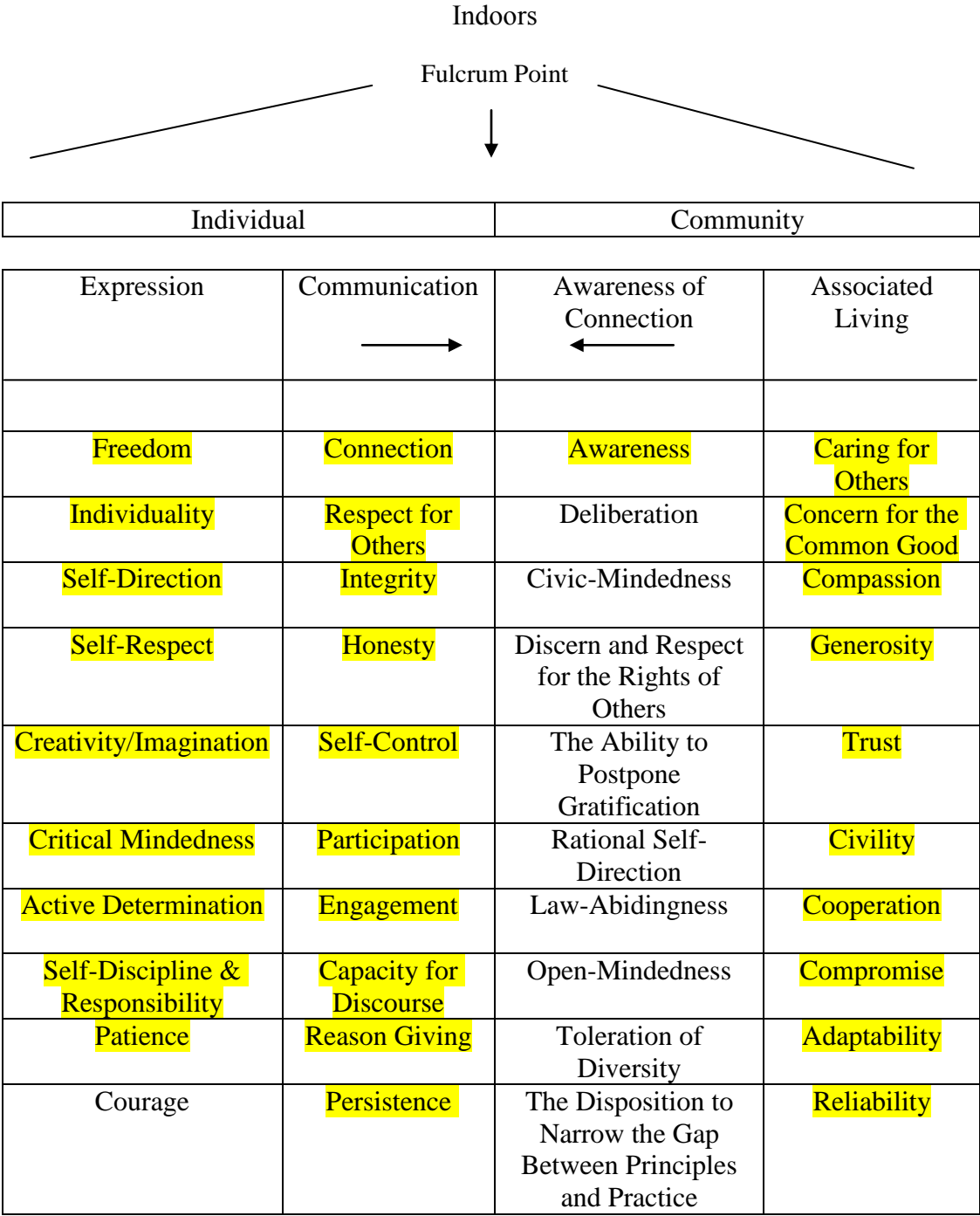
As I explained in Chapter 2, expression and communication are often two sides of the same coin. If each individual does not communicate his or her experiences and express his or her individual views, judgments, and desires, in a way that others can understand, then the democratic process of citizens working together to achieve compromise and improvement will be compromised. In addition to the willingness of citizens to attempt to communicate their experiences with others, democracy also requires that citizens learn to understand the views and experiences of others, so that what initially seems foreign and “other” may become something with which they can sympathize or at least empathize with enough to take into consideration when making decisions.

According to Dewey, associated living between citizens is also essential. Without a social interest and tie between citizens, democracy will struggle. As we saw in Chapters 1 and 2, Dewey explains that, “[f]ree and open communication, unself-seeking and

reciprocal relationships, and the sort of interaction that contributes to mutual advantage, are the essential factors in associated living” (Dewey, 1919-1920, p 92). This means that associated living can be attained by fostering the growth of individuals so that free intercourse, unhampered exchange of ideas, mutual respect, friendship, and love – in short, those modes of behaving which make life richer and more worth living – can be achieved (Dewey, 1919-1920, p. 90).

Lastly, according to Dewey, it is our consciousness of the connection of our activities with others that creates community. A mere ordering or form of society does not, in itself, create community. It is our conscious interactions with one another that makes us social and that produce associated living, and it is our conscious democratic participation and interactions that makes our society democratic. A way of life exemplified by these four criteria, identified by Dewey as essential for ideal democracy, can be promoted in students by developing the democratic civic virtues upon which these inclinations of behavior depend. In Chart 7, below, the civic virtues upon which these four criteria depend, and whose development can be enhanced by the school aesthetics discussed in this chapter, are highlighted.

Chart 7: Democratic Civic Virtues Developed by Beautiful Visual Aesthetics:



By developing the highlighted democratic civic virtues, the aesthetic suggestions in this chapter can contribute to successful civic education and democratic citizenship.

While I do not discuss the ways in which the aesthetic improvements in this chapter can be created and maintained by students, the improvement of school environments provide exemplary opportunities for student participation and engagement in cooperative projects to improve and support the community, meeting the two characteristics for successful civic education below:

- 4) Civic education programs should provide opportunities for students to contribute to others, their school, and the wider community by partaking in community service learning and contributing to communal celebrations and festivals.
- 5) Civic education should include many opportunities for students to participate in cooperative learning activities where they have ample opportunities to evaluate different options, work together with other students, and find mutually satisfying solutions.

The aesthetic suggestions made in this chapter can also contribute to the improvement of civic education by fulfilling characteristic number 6:

- 6) Successful civic education should provide routine exposure to environments and behaviors that develop democratic civic virtues because habituation is necessary for their development.

In Chapter 2, I explain that Dewey, along with many others, believe that democratic civic virtues do not necessarily develop on their own, but rather must be developed through practice and habituation, the basis of the sixth guideline. Without concerted effort and routine practice civically virtuous characteristics are unlikely to develop into consistent traits that define behavior. Simply learning or being instructed that these virtues exist and

are essential for democracy will do little to help citizens learn to live by them. In order for virtues to define citizen behavior, children must routinely be given opportunities to practice and live the ideals and virtues necessary for democracy. Consequently, Chapter 2 shows that civic education programs should provide ample opportunities for students to cultivate the habits of democratic civic virtue. The pervasive, inescapable, and continuous effect of learning environments on students is one of the main reasons American schools should pay more attention to their design and aesthetics. This routine exposure of students to the aesthetics of school environments makes school aesthetics beneficial for the improvement of civic education because, if the aesthetics have positive behavioral effects, students can become habituated to them, through the consistent exposure.

The seventh characteristic, identified in previous chapters, that contribute to successful civic education is that students should have the opportunity to develop a balance of civic virtues:

- 7) Civic education should aim to develop democratic virtues within citizens in a balanced way that supports the development of both individual and communal dispositions, thus encouraging a creative dynamic.

As can be seen in Chart 7, above, these suggestions for improving the visual aesthetic of the interior of schools can contribute to the development of civic virtues necessary both for individual dispositions as well as for those supporting communal dispositions. Contrary to many approaches, which develop either individual or communal impulses, improving civic education through the environmental aesthetics of schools allows students to develop civic virtues in a balanced way.

In order for democracy to remain vital it must be composed of citizens who have learned, through experience and practice, how to transform the tension between individual interests and general welfare into a creative and dynamic union capable of creating dignified human beings who are fully engaged in communities composed of associated living and cooperative relationships. By making man “whole, complete in himself” (Schiller, 1795, p.86), true freedom can be attained within each man. “Just as Beauty resolves the conflict of natures in its simplest and purest example, in the eternal opposition of the sexes, so does she resolve it – or at least aims at resolving it – in the intricate totality of society” (Schiller, 1795, p. 137). Hence, beautiful school aesthetics have the ability not only to develop civic virtues necessary for the health and maintenance of democracy, they also have the ability to promote an internal freedom within the citizens by balancing their individual and communal impulses; all of which allow democracy to become a focal point that preserves a balance between individual rights and the common good, making continued political and personal freedom possible.

Imagine if every American school was a beautiful, nurturing, inspiring environment. Imagine if the schools in your community were beautiful spaces that you enjoyed visiting and in which you wanted to spend time. How would this change the education our children are receiving? How would this change the way our democracy and its citizens function? I argue that by implementing the suggestions in this chapter for aesthetic improvements we can improve civic education in American schools. By creating environments that reduce stress, provide spaces that invite collaboration and

community-building, and that honor and encourage creativity, freedom, and individuality, schools can develop dispositions in students to behave in ways that are foundational for democratic citizenship.

Although adding color, organizing classrooms, and increasing natural light in schools will not assure that all of their students become engaged and participatory citizens, schools that implement these suggestions will make it possible for their students to develop into the kinds of people, with the kinds of habituated dispositions, and civic virtues, that are necessary for civic engagement and participation. While not sufficient for successful civic education, without the support of civic knowledge and civic skills, civic virtues are an essential component and foundation of democratic citizenship, and all civic education programs in American schools should be committed to their development.

Chapter 8: Visual Aesthetics: Outside Schools

“Our natural history is just as important as our human history, because it’s impossible to know who you are until you know where you are.”

- Richard Louv (2011)

The visual aesthetic of the outside of school buildings can also contribute to the encouragement, or hindrance, of students developing democratic civic virtues. Two examples of the effect the outdoor visual aesthetic of schools can have are discussed below: the uniqueness of their exterior design and the visual connection of schools to their ecological, historical, and cultural communities.

Far from schools being unique, inspiring, expressive spaces, most schools in this country have been built to look the same; and their aesthetics do little to encourage the development of democratic civic virtues. The same barren school grounds, depicted in the images below, are ringed by chain-link fences:



Photographs 65 and 66: Barren school grounds surrounded by ugly chain-link fences are a common aesthetic of American public schools.



Photographs 67: Barren school grounds surrounded by ugly chain-link fences are a common aesthetic of American public schools.

Elementary schools are pock-marked with isolated plastic and metal play equipment;



Photographs 68 and 69: Most elementary schools have relatively barren playgrounds with isolated play equipment, each one similar to the next.

And middle schools and high schools are surrounded by expanses of barren playing fields:



Photographs 70 and 71: Barren playing fields surround most middle and high schools, which lack unique character and inspiring aesthetics.

These pictures show schools from all over the country, and they all share in their boxy, plain impersonality. As Taylor (2008) says, “Sense of place has been erased” (p. 323). You cannot tell from these pictures where the schools are located. There is nothing in the aesthetic of these schools that speaks of the communities they are built in, the ecology of the land surrounding them, or the cultures and histories of the children and teachers learning and teaching within them. They are built as though their sense of place does not matter, but it does.

In *Make, Do, and Mend: Solving Placelessness through Embodied Environmental Engagement*, Isis Brook (2012) explains that a “rich web of relationships” weaves places and people together; creating environments that “are both nurtured by and [that] nurture the people who live there” (p. 110). She continues by pointing to research⁷⁴ that shows, “when these rich relationships are truncated by some kind of wholesale development design from outside, the place becomes placeless and the people alienated from where

⁷⁴ Hummon, 1992; Lewicka, 2011; Smith, 2007; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell 1996; Buchecker, 2009.

they live” (p. 110). I argue that this kind of placelessness and alienation is something most students suffer from in their schools today⁷⁵.

As I show in what follows, in schools designed with no individual personality or unique sense of place, active determination, the disposition to put principles into practice, and a sense of freedom to create and manifest change, will not be modeled for or encouraged within students. A school that has not been created to be or say anything more than “school-building,” lacks integrity. It does not demonstrate who or what the people using the space are; nor does it show how this knowledge can be expressed through the careful, intentional crafting of space; nor does it celebrate and encourage what is unique about its community, its land, or its inhabitants. As a consequence, these placeless spaces leave children alienated from where they spend a majority of their time each day. Schools become places that are not nurtured and, in turn, do not nurture the students and teachers within them, resulting in a deficit of potential for the development of democratic civic virtues.

Brook (2012) characterizes the relationship many students have to their schools perfectly, when she describes the consequence of the dispaedness of the contemporary urbanite:

⁷⁵ This placelessness I identify in schools is also present in many other developments in our communities today. For example, when you walk into a Target you know you are in a Target – because they all share the same design and aesthetics – however, there is nothing about the environment that indicates where any particular Target is located. You could just as easily be in Boulder, Colorado, as Miami, Florida, or any other city or town in the United States. Transferring place identity to a brand or retailer and taking it away from the land, culture, and history of the people who compose a community mitigates the agency, identity, and connection of the people.

[T]hey are unable to care for their environment in the same way we do not care for a bland hotel room; someone else will clear up the mess and there is no reason to polish the furniture or nurture the corporate style planting scheme in the lobby. We either don't see that these things need doing or we don't think it is our job to do them. (p. 110)

This kind of disconnection – where students either do not recognize when there is work that needs to be done within their schools or, more commonly, do not think it is their job, or right, to do it – has dire consequences for the health of our democracy. Brook's personal experience speaks volumes to the momentous obstacle such displacement and disengagement presents for the development of democratic civic virtues within our schools:

[I]f moved, as I admit I sometimes am, to surreptitiously dust the leaves of a plant with my own handkerchief to let it breathe, such behavior is deemed odd. There is a particular way we are expected to inhabit public space and caring for it with *direct personal action* is out of place. (2012, p. 110)

This description applies perfectly to the relationship most students have to their schools. The placelessness of schools makes caring for the school environment, as well as influencing it through direct personal action, seem out of place and actively discouraged. It is essential that we begin to see creating learning environments such as this, in which personal action and care are out of place, as contrary to the development of democratic civic virtues.

We must shift our perspective on the importance and role of school environments. We must begin to recognize their power and influence and cease viewing them as secondary, unimportant trivialities. Brook (2012) says,

More needs to be said about the nature of this relationship between people and place. Of primary importance is getting away from the idea that a relationship, in this context, is about two separate things interacting. Edward Casey makes this clear when he says:

Any effort to assess the relationship between self and place should point not just to reciprocal influence ... but, more radically, to constitutive co-ingredients: each is essential to the being of the other. In effect there is no place without self; and no self without place. (Casey, 2001, p. 406)

This helps to usefully balance the commonplace notion that people make places with the more fundamental aspect of the relationship: that places make people. Thus when we ask questions such as, ‘What kind of places do we want to maintain or bring about?’ we are at the same time asking the question ‘what kind of people do we want to be?’ (pp. 111-2)

Every day we answer this question, whether intentionally or not, with the aesthetics of our schools. When schools are isolated both from the natural environment and their surrounding community, civic-mindedness and care for others is not represented or created, and the design of the school buildings themselves makes the development of these, and other, virtues unlikely.

A school whose design is unaware of its community, surroundings, inhabitants, and the effects it has on them, will not develop, within the students, awareness for how their own behaviors affect others, of the needs of their community, or of the role they can and should play within a democratic society. A school design that appears to be unaware of the importance of democratic civic virtues, and the vital role it has to play in developing them, will do little to awaken this awareness in its students. On the contrary, it will perpetuate the same unconsciousness and lack of awareness by which it appears to operate and appears to have been designed. Our schools answer the question of what kind

of people we want to bring about, everyday, through their aesthetics. And currently, the answer to this question is that, in practice, the aesthetics of our schools are *not* contributing to healthy, engaged, participatory democratic citizens.

As I discuss in this chapter, by making our schools unique, expressive, beautiful places, connecting schools to their environment, making use of natural surroundings, and creating connection and flow throughout the school and grounds, we can counteract placelessness, and begin to develop virtues necessary for engaged, participatory, active citizens. However, like so many other aspects of environmental aesthetics and their effects on behavior, understanding place attachment, the factors that contribute to its development, its affects, and the causal mechanisms by which it works, is complicated, difficult, and spread across multiple disciplines. For example,

[S]ociologists focus on symbolic meanings of settings to understand their influence on human interactions and develop a rich understanding of community development; anthropologists seek to understand the cultural significance of places in everyday life; human geographers have explored the concept of “sense of place”; environmental psychology has brought person-place cognitions, emotions and behaviors to light and have focused on place identity (Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996) as well as attachment (Altman & Low, 1992). Community psychology and even more applied fields, such as community development and urban planning have also shown considerable interest in the concept of place attachment (Dallago et al., 2009; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Vaske & Kobrin, 2001). (Dallago et. al., 2012, p. 5)

These examples of the wide-spread interest in sense of place and place attachment, along with the differing approaches and focus, demonstrate how important, and yet complex, man’s interactions with, and the effects of the environment, are. There is no single study or strain of research that addresses the issue. Rather, there is a complicated, overlapping

array of different disciplines that all have something different to contribute to the understanding of this subject. Researching this topic is made even more challenging because:

There is considerable undifferentiated meaning between place attachment and other terms often used as synonymous (such as emotional bonds, affiliation, behavioral commitment, satisfaction, rootedness, membership and belonging) which are sometime loosely associated in theoretical descriptions as peculiar aspects of a more general concept (Pretty et al., 2003). Furthermore literature shows a big overlap between place attachment and other concepts: place identity, sense of community, local bonding, value of community places, social capital, social cohesion, community support. For example, emotional ties and affiliation with place are sometimes defined as aspects of identity, whereas other times these same factors are used to define attachment. (Dallago et. al., 2012, p. 6)

As Lynne C. Manzo and Douglas D. Perkins (2006) observe, between these literatures, there is a lack of “cross-pollination,” as can be seen by the parallel discussions on community building, social capital, and citizen participation that occur independently, and without reference to one another, in each field (p. 336). To see the full benefits possible of each school having a unique and connected sense of place we must take what Manzo and Perkins call an ecological or cross-disciplinary approach. They say that “A cross-disciplinary analysis is essential to better understand the nature of people’s relationships to place and to develop a more holistic view of how such relationships influence our experiences of place and the success of our communities” (p. 336). Therefore, by connecting the research in these disparate fields, it is possible to see the beneficial effects – for the development of community building, social capital, citizen participation, and democratic civic virtues – that could be produced by creating a unique sense of place in each American school.

Following the suggested ecological or cross-disciplinary approach, I try to piece together a coherent understanding, based on research, for why creating schools with unique aesthetics, and aesthetics that connect schools to their surrounding ecology, culture, and history, is an effective way to promote the development of democratic civic virtues in students. Multiple studies have been done that show place attachment can predict civically beneficial behavior. For example, Brown et al. (2003) arrived at this conclusion by researching place attachment and its role in neighborhood revitalization. Manzo and Perkins (2006) found this to be true when researching the effects, on community participation and planning, of place attachment. Dallago et al (2009) looked at the development of social capital and perceived safety in adolescents across a comparison of 13 countries and found place attachment to predict civically virtuous behaviors. Likewise, Baske and Kobrin (2001) found that place attachment had a profound effect on environmentally responsible behavior.

All of these studies found that places that provide meaning and create affection in those who inhabit them, increase behaviors aimed at protecting and improving these places, and these behaviors display (and strengthen) important democratic civic virtues such as participation, engagement, care, connection, and responsibility. Dallago et al. (2012) explains:

The...mediation effect with social capital confirms that place attachment is also relevant for civic engagement and participation in community service and social action (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Affective bonds to places can help inspire action because people are motivated to seek, stay in, protect, and improve places that are meaningful to them (Brown et al., 2003), so that participation can be seen as a behavioral manifestation of place attachment. (p. 16)

These studies indicate that when people are attached to a place their emotional bonds illicit civically beneficial behaviors and dispositions. Because a student is attached to their school, for example, and it is meaningful to them, they will be inspired to take action in order to seek, stay in, protect, and improve it. Thus, this resultant civic engagement, participation in community service, and social action can be seen as a result of a student's attachment to their school.

In addition to promoting civic virtues, such as responsibility, participation, and engagement, this mediation effect with social capital – or the development of attachment, affection, and care – also seems to contribute to the development of personal identity and community building in places with a well defined sense of place. This effect of place attachment on identity and community building was found in a study by Mae Davenport and Dorothy Anderson (2005) who show, through surveys, that the change of meaningful landscapes were seen as affecting both personal identity as well as the coherence of influenced communities. The amalgamation of these studies indicate that sense of place can develop civic virtues. Next I show that aesthetic elements of the physical environment can contribute to the development of such a beneficial sense of place, and can be implemented in American schools.

Shamsuddin and Ujang (2008), explicate three aspects involved in the creation of a sense of place: physical setting, psychological and social processes, and activities done in a place.

Place is composed of three broad interrelated components that give meanings to places: the physical setting, the individual's internal psychological and social processes and attributes and activities done at the place (Canter, 1977; Relph, 1976; Smaldone, Harris, & Sanyal, 2005; Stedman, 2003; Stokols & Shumaker, 1981). In the people's experience of a place, the physical forms, activities and meanings combined together to form the sense place and character (Montgomery, 1998). (Shamsuddin & Ujang, 2008, p. 400)

In studying a housing development in Tehran, and the place attachment of its residence, the research of Kamalipour et al. (2012) gives further evidence that physical aspects of the environment are important for producing place attachment. Their research confirms that for the residents of the housing development “physical dimensions of attachment are regarded as crucial in developing a sense of belonging” (p. 1).

Besides the physical setting of a space, these studies also found other aspects of place that contribute to a place's meaning, character, and sense of place. However, my focus is only on the physical characteristics that can contribute to developing place attachment. This limited focus is representative of my approach throughout the dissertation. Because my focus is on the physical aesthetics of school environments and my method is cross-disciplinary, there is much related research in each field that I do not examine or explicate. One of the drawbacks to this approach is that I do not fully cover any individual field or the related research in it. I also do not discuss the other myriad benefits, found in the literature, of improving school design and learning environments, besides their contribution to the development of democratic civic virtues, such as the improvement of academic performance and student health. Additionally, as shown by the studies discussed above, aspects of the environment, such as a unique sense of place and

meaning, that do contribute to the development of democratic civic virtues, can be developed and supported in ways other than physical school design and the improvement of a school's environmental aesthetics, such as paying attention to the activities done by students at school. My approach also does not address these other ways to support the characteristics I am endorsing, but instead focuses exclusively on the effects of the environment and aesthetics of schools.

Drawing on the work of S. Wheeler (2004), who wrote on sustainable developments and the current drawbacks of American suburbs, I identify aspects of an environment that detract from its sense of place and the attachment people feel for it. Wheeler describes the "geography of nowhere" (Kunstler, 1993) found in so many manmade environments today as the product of economic globalization, standardized products, and generic urban design. Wheeler suggests that these places are characterized by no sense of place, history, or cultural, and by a complete lack of distinctiveness. As illustrated at the beginning of this chapter, unfortunately, the physical environments of many American schools can be described in just this way: characterized by a geography of nowhere, lacking all distinction.

In contrast to these aesthetics of placelessness, a sense of place, to which students easily can become attached, Wheeler (2004) suggests, can be created by aesthetics that represent an authentic connection to local ecosystems, history, culture, and community. Additionally, research, such as that done by Shuhana Shamsuddin and Norsidah Ujang (2008), on attachment to traditional streets in Malaysia, as opposed to new shopping

developments, found that distinctive and unique characteristics of the streets, which result in a unique identity and sense of pride, contribute to their increased sense of place. More specifically, they found that historic buildings and diverse architectural façade treatments give “variety to the streetscapes” (p. 406) which is part of their distinctive character. They also found “the sense of color and movement along the streets make them more distinctive than other streets” (p. 407), contributing to the greater attachment people feel to these places over others that lack unique, historical, and colorful aesthetics.

This study demonstrates that there is a strong identification on the distinctiveness of the places and the emotional attachment. [A] majority of the respondents who felt [the traditional streets studied] were different and unique also felt that they were attached to the places (Statement: “I am attached to this place”) while those who identified that the traditional streets are distinctive in terms of local and traditional products also had a strong attachment to the places. This suggests the significance of distinct image in influencing the emotional attachment. (Shamsuddin & Ujang, 2008, p. 407)

If we want to create schools that encourage and develop democratic civic virtues then, as Wheeler suggests, we must build communities (and schools) worthy of our affection. Our schools should have distinctive, unique aesthetics and authentic connections to local ecology, history, culture, and community. By creating a unique sense of place at each school, instead of creating educational environments that are standardized, generic, and monolithic, we can contribute to the creation of schools that have meaning for students, inspire affection, and illicit behaviors aimed at protection and improvement. As described previously, behaviors such as these, which can be inspired by unique, authentic, and diverse school environments, are those that can contribute to the development of democratic civic virtues. The virtues, developed by meaning, care, and

behaviors aimed at the protection and improvement of a place, are ones such as connection, respect, concern for the common good, civic-mindedness, integrity, engagement, and participation.

Additionally, by contributing to the identity of individual students, as well as by providing something shared around which group-identity and community can form (Davenport & Anderson, 2005) aesthetics that create a sense of place in American schools can also promote and develop the four criteria identified by Dewey as essential for ideal democracy. By contributing to the identity of individuals and groups, through physical aesthetic features of the school environment, individual expression and communicated experience can be encouraged. For example, when a student's identity is determined partially by the colorful façade and unique architecture of their school they will be encouraged to express themselves and communicate their experiences through protecting and improving the expressive aesthetics of the school environment. Similarly, when a school has distinctive environmental features around which the community can develop a group-identity, associated living and a consciousness of the connection between individuals and their actions and choices will likely be promoted and actively practiced by students who are mutually engaged in the protection and improvement of their school.

By combining various research in this way, it becomes evident that transforming American schools from homogenous, uniform environments into unique environments, each with their own distinctive aesthetics and authentic connections to their ecology,

culture, and community, can create a sense of place at each school that is worthy of its students' affection and attachment. The meaning and care, elicited by such environmental characteristics, has also been shown to promote behaviors aimed at the protection and improvement of the places to which students are attached, and these feelings and behaviors are those that can develop democratic civic virtues. In this way, changing the external visual aesthetics of our schools can contribute to the improvement of civic education and the strengthening of our democracy, through their contribution to the development of democratic civic virtues. Below, I provide specific examples of how schools can create these beneficial school aesthetics by making them unique as well as connecting them to their surrounding ecology, culture, history, and community.

UNIQUE AESTHETICS

Wright (1961) said, "It was Lao Tze, five hundred years before Jesus, who, so far as I know, first declared that the reality of the building consisted not in the four walls and the roof but instead in the space within, the space to be lived in" (p. 58). This insight highlights the importance of space and of creating a sense of place. A sense of place is not made by constructing dysfunctional, isolated barriers that come together to form purely utilitarian spaces, which lack personality and give little room for the flourishing of the human spirit. Rather, when creating a building, and especially a school, materials should be used to consciously construct a space that holds, teaches, and inspires the humans who will live, work, and learn within it.

David Popenoe (2011), reflecting on the decline of virtue in our country, says, “The broad answer to what has gone wrong is that children are creatures of their environment, and the environment for childrearing in America has taken a marked turn for the worse” (p. 144). In contrast to the uniform, bland, and unexpressive school aesthetics depicted in the first section, every school should strive to be a unique place where students, teachers, parents, and other members of the community want to be and are proud to contribute. Schools should be individual, inspirational, and inviting. The images below show four different examples of how schools can create unique aesthetics using light, color, shape, windows, and unique architectural design:



Photographs 72 and 73: Examples of schools employing unique design, shapes, and colors to create individual, inspirational, and inviting learning environments.



Photographs 74 and 75: Examples of schools employing unique design, shapes, and colors to create individual, inspirational, and inviting learning environments.

Photograph 72 shows the Kindergarten Kekec in Slovenia, where what could be sterile vertical columns by adding strips of color, which enliven the space, making it more stimulating and interesting. The large windows behind the columns, and overhead skylights, create varied patterns of lighting, transferring the vertical lines of the columns into horizontal shadows on the floor, thereby creating unique and continually changing visual effects. Further interest and intrigue is added to the space by scattering small windows throughout what would otherwise be a bland brick wall.

Photograph 73 shows a kindergarten classroom at Shining Mountain Waldorf School, in Colorado that avoids the generic feel of standard rectilinear buildings, by using curved walls and an organic, spiraling ceiling. The carpet, walls, and ceiling are all slightly different shades of the same color, resulting in a coherent and harmonious aesthetic. This peaceful feel is furthered by the use of natural wood in the ceiling and furniture, as well as through gauzy light-filtering materials across the windows.

Additional light, imitating that experienced outdoors, is provided by the high skylights, in place of standard artificial lighting.

In photograph 74 the Anishinabe Academy, in Minnesota, provides yet another example of how school environments can be designed in unique and beautiful ways. Creating a two-story interior, filled with floor-to-ceiling windows, this space brings in natural light, provides students with external views, and creates a sense of spaciousness. The mural decorating the center post transforms it from simply a load-bearing device into a beautiful work of art which students can enjoy and appreciate. Lastly, photograph 75 demonstrates how the use of non-traditional shapes, in an Estonian school, can create unique spaces. Using triangular, instead of square or rectangular, windows and filling them with colored glass transforms what could be a relatively uninteresting wall into a space with appealing, interesting, and distinctive visual aesthetics: creating a unique sense of place.

The next three images also provide examples that show the beautiful effect entryways that use unique shapes – other than squares, rectangles, and right-angles – can be. The doorway below contains windows of interesting shapes, perhaps mimicking rocks or stones. By exhibiting characteristics different from common doors, this entryway encourages attention and peaks curiosity and interest.



Photograph 76: Entryway using unusually shaped windows, wooden doors, slanted roof, flowers, and natural materials to create a unique, welcoming atmosphere.

The slanted concrete walls and roof, the wooden doors, and the stumps, flowers, and pumpkins surrounding the entryway contribute to the unique, natural sense of place created by this entrance. The image below shows an oval entryway to a garden, demonstrating the intriguing effect entryways in unusual shapes can have.



Photograph 77: An oval entryway shows how unusual shapes can add intrigue and an inviting feel to any space.

Both inside and out, when doors, windows, and walls are designed in ways other than rectilinear, with uniform horizontal and vertical lines, it seems to bring the space to life and create a unique and inspiring feel. As the arching stairway in the entrance below shows, curved designs and a symphony of colors can make a space organic, artistic, and beautiful.



Photograph 78: Curved windows, stairway, and ceiling create a uniquely organic space.

When in such a space, you will know where you are. You will not mistake your surroundings for that of any other undifferentiated space.

Again, the next two images show how effectively color can be used to create interesting and inspiring spaces. Alternating, bright colors can be used across the entire front of a school, as in the image below:



Photograph 79: Color can be used to enliven a school's exterior.

Or one color can be used to highlight and draw attention to the entryway.



Photograph 80: Color can be used to highlight and draw attention to an entryway making the space unique and inviting.

Imagine what it would be like if our schools had entryways that shared characteristics with the images above. Each of these entryways is unique. Each one captures your attention and presents you with something beautiful, expressive, and inviting. The originality suggests (and likely contributes to it being true) that something intriguing and interesting is taking place within these buildings. Even if nothing more than this awareness, interest, and desire to engage were evoked by these entryways they would successfully capture and aid in the development of essential democratic civic virtues. Creating a unique sense of place within our schools can contribute to the development of democratic civic virtues in this way.

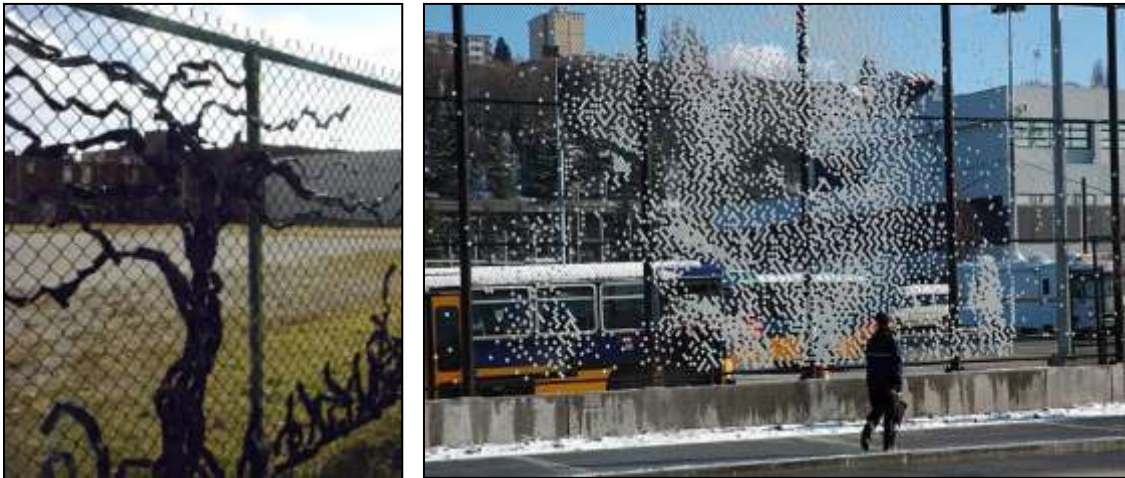
While architectural designs can achieve unique aesthetics and help to build a school with a unique sense of place, even small changes to school environments can have a large impact on the connection students feel to their schools and the messages these schools send. For example, something as simple as changing the perimeter of school grounds from barren, unattractive chain-link fence to a fence that has been transformed through student work and creativity can help to distinguish the school as an expressive, creative environment that cultivates beauty and student development. The two images below depict the way a crocheted garden of colorful flowers along a chain-link fence creates a unique sense of place in photograph 74, which differentiates it from other similar locations, such as that shown in photograph 73.



Photographs 81 and 82: Compare the plain chain-link fence surrounding school grounds on the left with the fence on the right that has been beautifully transformed with croquette flowers. The flowers define a sense of place, adding character and beauty to an otherwise barren, uninteresting space.

It is both easy and common to think that small details, such as the material used for fences, or whether fences are well maintained, don't really matter, and it might seem over-the-top to think school fences can have such a large effect. Especially as school budgets shrink and teachers are laid off, how important can the fences surrounding school grounds really be? What The Broken Window Theory suggests, and the research discussed in this Chapter shows, is that even relatively small details of the physical environment can have a significant effect. An ugly, broken, old fence surrounding a school indicates that the school community does not have the power, initiative, or desire to create an attractive, welcoming boundary; and this realization suggests that there are probably far more difficult things that the school community also lacks the ability or willingness to change. The ugly, confining, broken state of such a fence confronts each child and encourages ugly, broken behavior. The fence models and elicits disrespect, lack of care, and disengagement. These fences subliminally teach of, encourage, and perpetuate broken people, broken communities, and a broken democracy.

But how easily we could transform this message! How quickly, the boundaries of our schools could go from warning signs and a discouragement of freedom, expression, and engagement to being beautiful physical representations of the vitality, participation, and desire of our students to contribute to their communities and to create and maintain the environments in which they live and learn. With nothing more than pieces of paper, tape, creativity, and a desire to make a difference, the fences around our schools can contribute to creating a unique and distinctive sense of place, and in this way to inspiring further civic behavior and the development of democratic civic virtues. The two images below provide examples of transformed fences and the contributions they can make to unique spaces in our schools.



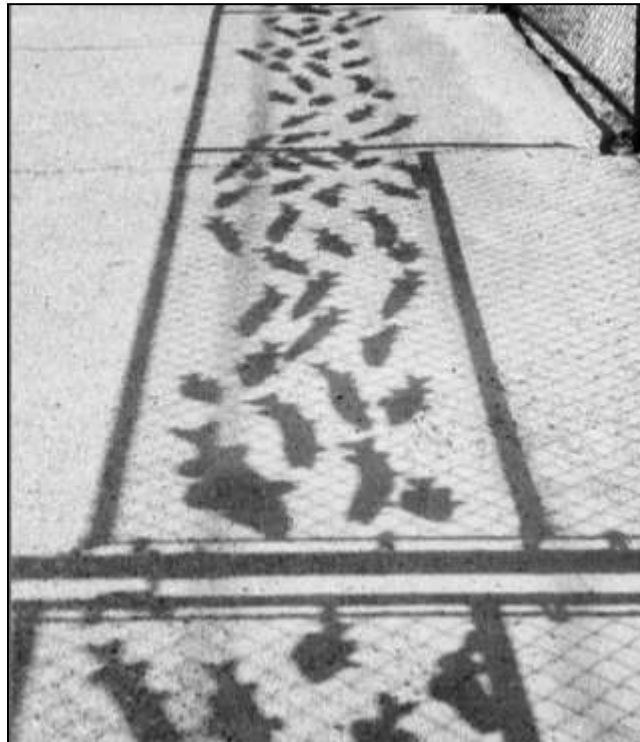
Photographs 83 and 84: These two photographs provide examples of how chain-link fences, and their surrounding areas, can be artfully transformed using only tape and pieces of plastic.

Such a transformation could be superficial and easily achieved through communal participation and creativity, in projects such as the fish decorations, created and assembled by students, shown below:



Photographs 85 and 86: Students can participate in the transformation of their schools by decorating fish and attaching them to the school's surrounding fences.

Such a small investment would result in an expressive fence, creating something the students could be proud of and attached to, as well as creating an unusual and exciting aesthetic within the school grounds, with which the children could interact.



Photograph 87: Not only will the student-made fish look beautiful on the fence, they will also cast intriguing shadow, adding to the artistic design and intrigue of the school environment.

The previous examples can be achieved with existing chain-link fences. We could also use other, more inviting, materials to completely transform the boundaries, and therefore the sense of place created at our schools, such as the wood and stone fences shown below:



Photographs 88 and 89: Schools can also surround their schools with fences made out of materials other than chain-link, such as these wood and stone fences.

What a different feelings our schools would have – and what different behaviors they would encourage – if they looked more like botanical gardens, zoos, museums, nature trails, or parks (as shown in the pictures to follow) instead of resembling corporate office buildings, at their best, and, as their worst, sharing many aesthetic features with our prisons.



Photographs 90-92: Examples of fences that could help our schools look more like nature trails, botanical gardens, zoos, museums, or parks.

Photograph 82 shows how school grounds could contain nature trails, defined by arches made of natural wood. Photograph 83 shows the effect of wooden fences, as opposed to the standard use of chain-link fence, and the natural, relaxed, inviting aesthetic it adds to a sense of place. Photograph 84 shows an impressive living wall, hopefully inspiring readers to think about the unique ways something as standard as fences surrounding our schools could be designed and used. As in this photograph, instead of being merely

utilitarian boundaries, fences could become surrounding walls of life, exposing children to increased flora and even used for the cultivation of edible plants and herbs. Such a fence surrounding a school would undoubtedly contribute to making it a unique and distinctive place, thus inspiring care, connection, and engagement in students.

Although fences are rarely considered one of the most important or influential aspects of a school, the previous examples begin to show just how profoundly even a relatively minor aspect of school aesthetics can affect, and potentially change, the messages we are sending to our children by the sense of place created at our schools. By shifting our perspective, and beginning to see school aesthetics as indicators of the level of development of democratic civic virtues possible within our schools, we can harness one of the most potent resources available for providing a healthy and sustainable base of civic virtue within our citizenry. Beauty has the power to transform environments and create memorable and loveable places, and environments with such a sense of place have the power to deeply effect the development of our children, and consequently the health of our democracy. It can take relatively little to change our perspectives, leading to creative ways to imbue each school with a distinctive sense of place, as in the two images below. These photographs show again how inspiring and beautiful the fences surrounding our schools can become with the addition of something as simple as beautiful patterns and designs.



Photograph 93: Embroidery on chain-link fences provides another example of how fences can be used to create a unique feature of a school, giving students, teachers, parents, and community members something to care for, identify with, and be proud of.

CONNECTION

Frank Lloyd Wright understood the importance of place. He was a master at connecting a building to its environment and of creating spaces that flowed into one another. By considering his work, I identify several important aspects for creating a unified, appropriate, and expressive sense of place, which can also be applied to our schools in order to connect them to the ecology, history, culture, and community that

surrounds them. Using Wright's work as an example can be problematic because his work is expensive and was often designed for private use. The reason for discussing Wright's architecture is not to suggest that schools must or should hire expensive architects or that schools should be designed in ways out of touch with, or out of reach of, common school communities. Rather, Wright's architecture provides an inspiring, large-scale example of how buildings can be connected to their surroundings. I identify general principles in Wright's architecture that can be applied to schools in varying ways. Wright's work should be viewed as an inspirational ideal to help foster greater creativity and ideas for how to create a sense of place in our schools.

Wright consciously created architecture for democracy. It is said, that by liberating American architecture from borrowed European ideas and the reproduction of classical boxy structures, Wright created, what he called, an organic architecture that grew out of the places it was to be built and the purposes for which it was to be used. Breaking free from traditional ideas about space, place, and architecture, Wright's work originated from a careful consideration of each individual place he built. By focusing on the unique characteristics of each individual location, and the unique needs and uses to which each building would be put, he brought the architectural emphasis away from following predetermined forms and styles and instead allowed his work to grow out of each unique location.

Perhaps in more ways than Wright himself realized, his architecture captures the spirit of democracy: like an exemplary democratic citizen, Wright's architecture was built

to express itself, trying to capture the full extent of experience, while at the same time, remaining deeply rooted in the environment and fully conscious of the reciprocal relationship it and the environment have on one another. It is this combination of creative expression, conscientious awareness, and use of the surrounding environment that should be taken up when designing schools to have a unique and connected sense of place within democracy.

“No other architect so intuitively designed to human scale. No other architecture took greater advantage of setting and environment. No other architect glorified the sense of ‘shelter’ as did Frank Lloyd Wright.⁷⁶” In writing about architecture, Wright presents a sentiment I have echoed many times throughout this dissertation, he said, “A building is not just a place to be. It is a way to be.⁷⁷” If we can learn to see the spaces that we educate our children in as parts of ourselves and of our communities, as coexistent and interactive with humans, as not only a place to be but also a way to be, we will begin to construct our school environments differently – to the benefit of civic education and the development of civic virtues.

There are specific characteristics that can be taken from examples of Wright’s architecture and philosophy and used in both small- and large-scale school designs to increase their sense of place, and through this, the development of democratic civic virtues. The first characteristic is that Wright carefully chose the materials he used in each construction, so that they were a product of the surrounding environment and helped

⁷⁶ http://www.fallingwater.org/assets/18_Background_On_Frank_Lloyd_Wright.pdf.

⁷⁷ <http://www.franklloydwright.org/>.

the buildings appear to grow out of the landscape. At the Fallingwater House, built for Edgar J. Kaufmann in Bear Run, Pennsylvania – probably his most famous private dwelling – Wright used stone to build cliff-like structures that blend with the adjacent cliff faces.



Photograph 94: Fallingwater, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, provides an example of how natural materials can be used to help buildings blend in with and connect to their surrounding environments.

At Taliesin West, Wright's home and school in Scottsdale, Arizona, Wright created multi-sided, terraced flagstone steps to mimic the distant mesas:



Photograph 95: Frank Lloyd Wright's school and home provides further example of how materials from the surrounding environment can be used to help create a connection between the surrounding landscape and built environments.

And the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, built in New York, New York, is crafted out of curving concrete. The contoured walls both stand out in their unique shape and blend in with the surrounding streets and buildings because of the material used. Not only does the concrete used to build the Guggenheim reflect and mirror the concrete used in the surrounding cityscape, but also the spiraled shape of the building seems to capture and reflect the ceaseless motion of the streets below:



Photograph 96: The Guggenheim Museum, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, shows how shape, design, and materials can be used even in urban areas to reflect the surrounding environment.

Like Wright's buildings, schools can attempt to use local materials, which reflect the surrounding environment, as much as possible. In many circumstances financial constraints may limit this use to a few key locations, such as entryways or school signs. The reason for looking at Wright's work is not to suggest that all schools should employ an expensive architect or fully remodel their school using only local materials. Rather, Wright's examples are meant to inspire new ways of thinking about the design of schools and the connection of these schools to their surrounding environment – which can be done on both large and small scales.

For example, schools can attempt to take on a form that reflects the surrounding environment and neighborhood of the school. By having a continuity of form and

materials between the school and what surrounds it, a deep awareness of the relationship between the school and the community can start to develop within the students, teachers, and community members. An awareness of how what could be seen as separate and isolated parts of the community interact and are related to one another can be facilitated through architecture and school campuses that highlight this connection. These connecting attributes could be as simple as blue trim present on all public spaces (libraries, post offices, schools, etc) or the use of limestone pillars at the entryway to a school (tying it to the surrounding limestone countryside) or it could involve extensive architectural design and the use of only local materials to tie the school to its landscape, as exemplified by the beautiful entryway constructed at the Wa He Lut Indian School in Olympia, Washington:



Photograph 97: The entryway of the Wa He Lut Indian School creates a connection between the school, its inhabitants, and the surrounding land and community through the use of local building materials, large windows, and cultural displays of traditional artwork.

This entryway was built not only to be an impressive and inviting entryway to the school, but also to serve as a space for the school community and the surrounding community of tribes to gather together. The space was built out of native cedar, using large hand-hewn poles as supports. The walls are lined with cases displaying native Indian artifacts, connecting the children to their cultural heritage and inspiring their interest in cultural artwork. The floor-to-ceiling glass walls at the front bring in copious amounts of natural light, opening the space to the outdoors and tying it to the land. The school is built on a hill overlooking the Nisqually River, and the entryway is constructed to appear as a Thunderbird protecting native lands:



Photograph 98: Designed to portray a thunderbird watching over territorial lands, the design of the Wa He Lut Indian School entryway incorporates traditional heritage and sends a message of community values.

This kind of thoughtfulness can bring meaning and unity to a school community, making the school a place where children can be proud of what their community stands for, and where they can learn how powerful it is to express these underlying beliefs aesthetically, for all to see and share, as they live, work, and learn within the rich sense of place they have created.

Extrapolating from Wright's architecture, connection between schools and their surrounding communities can also be achieved by having school grounds mimic ecologically appropriate landscapes. Far from the traditional flat playing fields speckled

with protruding play equipment, school grounds should be rich with natural vegetation. For example, if the school is in a wooded area, the campus should look as if it grew out of the forest, containing nature trails around the grounds:



Photograph 99: School grounds can incorporate walking trails and rich natural landscapes such as forests.

One way to achieve this would be for schools to be built on the edge of nature preserves or parks. Schools that are built in areas with nearby water, could also have small rivers or streams become focal points of their campuses and playgrounds, as shown in the picture below:



Photograph 100: School grounds can incorporate water and streams to add variety and interest to the landscapes, encouraging student awareness and engagement.

Schools located on dry prairie-land could have areas of tall grasses, landscape features built of rocks and contoured earth to create variety and texture, as well as nature trails:



Photograph 101: A school's campus should reflect the natural ecology of the area. For some schools this will mean forested campuses, for others prairie grasslands, etc.

In urban settings, schools can become garden oases within a sea of concrete, bringing many of the natural landscape elements back to the neighborhood and becoming a community focus point and shared amenity:



Photograph 102: In urban areas schools can become rich garden oases, providing the entire community with a valuable resource.

Urban schools can also create a connection with the surrounding environment by designing open campuses that are part of a larger urban walking or shopping area. This type of campus would be open to the flow of the community and the patterns of the urban setting, and could be the impetus for urban revitalization surrounding the school. In both urban and more rural settings, following the example of Wright's architecture, schools should blend into the surrounding landscape as much as possible, by being built out of similar materials, and creating a seamless sense of flow and belonging between the school buildings, grounds, and surrounding areas.

As these examples show, both large and small connections of schools to their surrounding community can help to define a sense of place in the school. By connecting

schools physically to their community through the use of local building materials, styles unifying public buildings, or the inclusion of ecologically appropriate landscapes on school grounds, schools can become identifiable landmarks that have characteristics that students can become attached to, care for, and feel connected to. Schools that have few interesting or unique characteristics and no authentic connections to their surrounding land and community will be more difficult to develop strong attachment to than school environments that contain such distinctive characteristics.

The entryway pictured below is another example of how a school can be built to emphasize expression and community and inspire care with a welcoming gesture that leads students to feel they have a place in which they are connected, respected, and encouraged to contribute.



Photograph 103: An example of how nature, design, architecture, open-space, and a concern for beauty can create an inviting, invigorating, unique sense of place.

Such an entryway has all the elements I am suggesting: flowers, bushes, grass, trees, natural stone and wood materials, a beautiful, artistic, graceful curving walkway inviting students to enter, and ample room for social interactions and community-building. If all our schools shared these characteristics the messages we would be sending our children about democracy, and the development we would be providing them concerning democratic civic virtues, would be noticeably different than it is now, when most entryways look more like the image below.



Photograph 104: Strait lines, undefined space, utilitarian design all create spaces that lack a sense of character and that do little to inspire belonging or care from students.

Studying these two images side-by-side is helpful for fully understanding the types of characteristics I am emphasizing as important for the development of democratic civic virtue. In some ways these two entryways are not vastly different: they both have pathways leading to double doors, they both contain windows in the entryway, and they both have patches of open grass and other vegetation near the entrance. And yet, these

two entryways portray vastly different messages because of important aesthetic differences.



Photographs of 103 and 104: Although ostensibly similar in many ways, comparing these two schools demonstrates the difference color, natural materials, curving lines, and the conscious creation of beautiful, expressive environments can make when designing schools.

The first entryway is beautiful, expressive, and receptive in ways completely lacking in the second entryway. The first example contains color, a variety of natural materials, and soft, curving lines that blend into one another and soften the impression made by the roof, windows, and pathway. The second example is not particularly beautiful or expressive and the impression it makes is harsh and rigged. All the lines and angles are straight – on the path, the roof, and the windows – there is no variety in texture or elevation – the doors, path, and grass all flow into one another creating a lack of defined space or pleasant areas for visiting and building community.

The first entryway sends a message of care and conscious design aimed at heightening and rewarding awareness, connection, and appreciation. When I look at it, I can tell that someone designed it with care so that it would be appealing and beautiful; consequently I am inspired to connect to it, care for it, and contribute to it. The second entryway looks utilitarian and unaware of or at least uninterested in whether the

aesthetics of the design connect it with or inspire the students who use it every day. When I look at it, I can see a lack of concern with beauty, connection, and appreciation; I see a utilitarian design aimed at functionality and ease. Consequently, I am not inspired to feel connected to it, to care for it, or to desire contributing to it. In this way, the first entryway evokes and encourages democratic civic virtues, while the second entryway does not. By transforming the entryways of schools – using the examples in this section, and others aimed at creating beauty, connection, and inspiration – the messages being sent and the behaviors encouraged can become supportive of a democratic way of life.

Wright's buildings also offer a good example for inspiring schools to be connected to their landscapes by creating an easy flow between outside and inside spaces. In Wright's architecture, inside spaces are not isolated from the outdoor environment. There is generally a free flow between the two, and many spaces were designed – both inside and out – to take advantage of benefits within the natural environment. At Fallingwater, the sound of falling water penetrates the entire home, and copious balconies, as well as three-story windows, give continuous views of the river:



Photograph 105: Fallingwater, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, also provides an example of how buildings can be designed to encourage flow and movement between indoor and outdoor spaces, unifying the building and the surrounding environment, as shown here through the use of large windows and well-placed balconies.

His work generally made optimal use of natural lighting, and flora growing near to the buildings – often creating semi-enclosed spaces around original trees and crafting other locations where plants could play a prominent role:



Photograph 106: Frank Lloyd Wright’s architecture often takes advantage of natural features of the landscape, making use of natural light, rocky landscape features, and surrounding flora.

To create a unified and meaningful sense of place schools should also have many doors allowing easy flow between outside and inside learning environments, emphasizing connection, versatility, and awareness. The schools below achieve this connection and versatility through classroom doors leading directly to inviting outdoor environments or through indoor spaces enclosed in a way that allows the natural elements to be experienced even when indoors:



Photographs 107 to 109: By designing schools with doorways and windows leading directly from the classrooms outdoors, as well as creating interior spaces that capture natural elements of the environment, schools and students can be more closely connected to their surroundings and immersed in unique and inspiring places.

School campuses that incorporate and create a seamless flow between indoor and outdoor environments can be designed to express, communicate, preserve, and perpetuate an understanding of and appreciation for both natural and cultural history. School buildings

such as these can capture the spirit of the people and the places that they serve, creating a unique, living, and inspiring sense of place.

Schools can also become connected to their surrounding culture, history, and community, creating an identifiable sense of place by celebrating, decorating, and designing schools based on the cultures of the children who attend the school and of the people who live within the school's surrounding community. Using traditional colors, styles, and decorative techniques is one way to create a vibrant sense of place in which the students can engage, participate, and gain a sense of personal responsibility and ownership.



Photographs 110 – 112: Examples of traditional architectural styles in Boston, Santa Fe, and New Orleans. Schools can represent and capture the surrounding culture of their communities through buildings designed in the traditional style of their region.

For example, these photographs show the traditional architectural styles in Boston, Santa Fe, and New Orleans – just imagine how unique and different schools in these three cities could be if they were designed or decorated based on these historical styles. Instead of all looking relatively the same, schools built using the historic architectural styles of their area could become gorgeous, individual representations of the surrounding community and culture. Wright said, "Whether people are fully conscious of this or not, they actually derive countenance and sustenance from the 'atmosphere' of the things they live

in or with. They are rooted in them just as a plant is in the soil in which it is planted.⁷⁸ If we want democratic citizens to grow, then we must see to it that the ‘atmosphere’ in which these citizens are raised have the sustenance to support the growth and flourishing of democratic civic virtue.

Making schools a more unified part of the community and surrounding environment encourages the development of civic-mindedness and makes it easier for students to participate and engage in the exploration of what surrounds them. The connection between schools and their surroundings also provides a venue for demonstrating what can be done when principles are put into practice and individuals decide to actively determine their environment. It can and should be the case that schools serve as an example for how the environment can be well-maintained, cultivated, and put to use for the enjoyment and education of the people using it. Schools built for this purpose could easily become examples and inspirations for entire communities, demonstrating creative ways to care for and improve upon the surrounding environment, creating places that promote attachment, build community, and inspire civic virtue.

The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, in Austin, Texas, is another great example of how a campus can be created to reflect, and encourage, an awareness of sense of place.

⁷⁸ <http://www.franklloydwright.org/>



Photograph 113: The Lady Bird Johnston Wildflower Center provides an exemplary example of how buildings can be designed to reflect the ecological and cultural history of their regions.

The Wildflower Center uses natural, stone building materials found in the surrounding area and its design reflects the area’s cultural history.



Photographs 114-116: The buildings at the Lady Bird Johnston Wildflower Center conserve and preserve the surrounding landscape and scarce natural resources. Each building maximizes enjoyment and awareness of heritage, nature, conservation, preservation, and the beauty and spirit of South Texas.

The buildings and campus are also designed to conserve and preserve the surrounding landscape and scarce natural resources – such as water, through an elaborate water

collection and storage system, including three large cisterns. Each building, and the campus as a whole, is designed to maximize the enjoyment and awareness of heritage, nature, conservation, preservation, and the beauty and spirit of South Texas – the entire space expresses, communicates, preserves, and perpetuates a sense of place; an awareness of which is hard to miss.

Less than half a mile from the Wild Flower Center is an elementary school. Unfortunately, there is little in its buildings or on its campus to make it different from any elementary school elsewhere in the country.



Photograph 117: The elementary school less than a mile from the Lady Bird Johnston Wildflower Center has little that reflects awareness, expression, or the spirit of its surrounding landscape and community.

The beauty, awareness, and expression of the spirit of the place – successfully captured at the Wildflower Center – is completely absent at the school. It is time to start asking ourselves why awareness, beauty, expression, communication, nature, and smart designs that take advantage of natural surroundings, should be relegated to special institutions that children are lucky to visit once on a field trip. Our schools should be the bearers,

within each community, of all that each place has to offer. Our schools should express, preserve, and perpetuate our natural and cultural histories. They should vibrantly dance with the spirit of the people and the place where they are built. If we start to think of our schools as places where we should invest our best community resources, making them beautiful, expressive centers of our communities; our children, our communities, and eventually our democracy can also be transformed.

FESTIVALS

Routinely creating and celebrating festivals in schools is another example of how students can be involved in the development of a greater sense of place, belonging, and attachment to their schools. Ros Durrett (2003) recognizes that, “A sense of community comes from a shared vision, where a clear sense of purpose values individual’s ideas and contribution and involves working together on community issues, celebrations, and problem solving” (p. 51). But “developing a sense of community is challenging, long-term work, [that requires] building levels of connectedness, belonging, and support” (Dugas & Schweitzer, 1997). Creating, hosting, and celebrating festivals are ways that this challenging community-building work can be fostered:

Dunstan suggests festivals can be used to build communities. Organizing a major festival takes a lot of individual and collective effort... Celebration can bind a community and it can also be the instrument that keeps the community a fresh and constantly renewing experience. Annual festivals create a shared testimony to community through the passage of time (Dunstan, 1994).” (Derrett, 2003, p. 53)

By annually celebrating a Winter Festival – as students at most Waldorf Schools do – including candle light, crafts, and traditional foods, students gain the opportunity to work together, to look forward to this time of year, and to strengthen their community through mutual enjoyment and the creation of special, shared traditions that link the students to their school and fellow students. The image below shows a spiral garden, a spiral made of evergreen boughs for the students to walk one at a time, each lighting their candle in the center and adding to the growing, magical candlelight placed along the spiral and filling the room with warmth.



Photograph 118: Celebrating the Winter Festival, students at Waldorf Schools around the world walk a spiral garden, adding the light of their candle to that placed by other students. Such festivals and traditions help to build community and a sense of belonging.

As Durrett (2003) explains, “The [schools]...managing the festivals and events temporarily offer a spatial boundary in terms of place, which harnesses the community’s vision of itself and provides participative opportunities to nurture and sustain what is important to their constituency” (p. 51). Festivals provide a venue and an opportunity to nurture and sustain a community’s values and vision of itself, allowing this identity to be

shared with the larger community. A Spring Festival, such as the one depicted below – with events like the May pole dance and flower-crown making – encourages students to welcome the greater community and to join together to create and enjoy events that represent and contribute to their shared sense of belonging and identity.



Photographs 119-121: Celebrating Spring with a community-wide festival allows students to contribute to the development, presentation, and celebration of their school’s community and values.

Festivals “celebrate a sense of place through organizing inclusive activities in specific, safe environments. They provide a vehicle for communities to host visitors and share such activities as representations of communally agreed values, interests, and aspirations.

Thirdly, they are the outward manifestation of the identity of the community and provide a distinctive identifier of place and people” (Durrett, 2003, p. 57).

The examples of festivals I use in this section are festivals celebrating seasons and aspects of the natural environment. Festivals celebrating cultural traditions of the region would also be suitable for building an increased sense of place in schools. However, festivals celebrating religious holidays or other celebrations that cannot be shared by all members of a school’s community are not good choices for creating community and developing the democratic civic virtues discussed in this dissertation. While religious studies, celebration, and prayer can contribute to the development of virtues beneficial for democracy, this method of their development is open to great controversy and disagreement among citizens in our country. Avoiding these disagreements within our schools and instead developing civic virtues by methods easily agreed upon and shared by all citizens – such as through celebrations of the season and surrounding ecology – will make the development of civic virtues in our schools more easily achieved and wide spread.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have shown that creating unique and connected school aesthetics can contribute to the improvement of civic education through the development and encouragement of democratic civic virtues. I have also provided several specific examples of how such an aesthetic could be created in American schools. In addition to developing democratic civic virtues, creating a sense of place in each school, to which students can feel connected and for which they can feel responsible, can also contribute to the improvement of civic education by meeting many of the characteristics identified in previous chapters as criteria of successful civic education programs. In what follows, I discuss the ways in which creating a sense of place in schools can meet these criteria.

Similarly to creating beautiful visual aesthetics inside schools, as discussed in Chapter 7, creating unique and connected visual aesthetics on the exterior of schools can also meet the first criteria identified for successful civic education:

- 1) General goals and methods for civic education should be provided but these should be flexible enough that the specifics of each school's needs, values, and inspirations can determine the details of the programs, and so each program can change as needed to address new problems and needs.

Approaching the improvement of civic education through aesthetic improvement allows general goals and methods for civic education – through the development of civic virtues – to be provided while allowing the execution of these methods to be flexible and the specifics determined by each school. This chapter identifies unique and connected aesthetics and their requisite creation of a sense of place at schools as important for the development of democratic civic virtues. However, how each school creates these

aesthetics can and should vary from school to school, based on physical, financial, cultural, ecological, and social variations. Similarly, what is done to achieve a unique sense of place in each school can be determined by the aesthetic judgments, values, and needs of the community served by each school. If the guideline for improved civic education is the creation of a sense of place in each school, then this guideline will also allow for change in order to address new problems and needs. As new situations arise, new methods can be found for creating an engaging, attractive sense of place.

The second characteristic of successful civic education is:

- 2) Ideals for our civic education programs should be cherished as leading to ever greater improvement. Although perfection should not be the goal, high objectives and standards are still essential to achieve improvement.

Meeting this characteristic are the grand (and expensive) examples of architecture such as that created by Wright, offered as suggestions in this chapter. Although at this point many schools will not be able to create a sense of place as impressive and complete as that created by Wright's architecture, holding Wright's work – and others like it – up as a high objective and standard is beneficial in order to motivate improvement and to shift ingrained patterns of thinking about school design. Ideals for school aesthetics should be cherished as impetus for ever greater improvement.

As discussed previously in this chapter, creating a sense of place at schools can develop behaviors and traits that embody a democratic way of being.

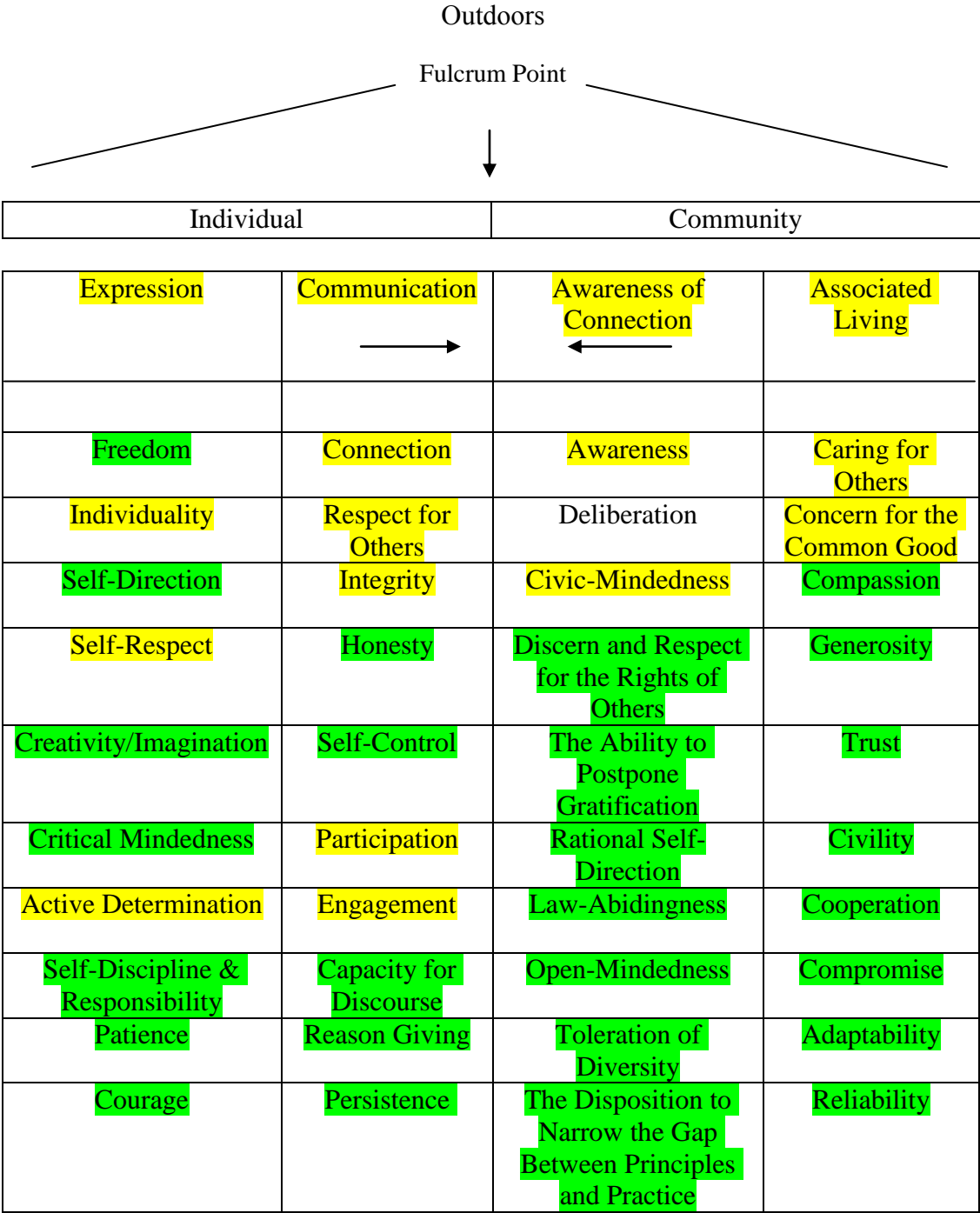
- 3) Civic education should focus on developing behaviors and traits that affect citizens' "ways of life," such that they embody a democratic way of being exemplified by awareness, participation, and engagement, through dispositions necessary for citizens to express themselves, communicate their

experiences, live and work in association with others, and be conscious of the connection between their actions and the well-being of others.

Chart 8, below, shows the democratic civic virtues (highlighted in yellow⁷⁹) developed by unique and connected external aesthetics of schools, indicating which of Dewey's criteria they support:

⁷⁹ The civic virtues highlighted in green are discussed concerning characteristics 4 and 5, below.

Chart 8: Democratic Civic Virtues Developed by Beautiful Visual Aesthetics:



Creating unique aesthetics and a sense of place that is connected to the surrounding ecology, culture, and community of a school can also meet criteria 4 and 5 for successful civic education:

- 4) Civic education programs should provide opportunities for students to contribute to others, their school, and the wider community by partaking in community service learning and contributing to communal celebrations and festivals.
- 5) Civic education should include many opportunities for students to participate in cooperative learning activities where they have ample opportunities to evaluate different options, work together with other students, and find mutually satisfying solutions.

As the research indicates, a sense of place in which students find meaning and to which students feel connected, inspires behaviors aimed at the protection and improvement of these spaces. If schools promote and support this type of behavior in students, then the process of creating and maintaining a unique aesthetic sense of place in schools can provide students with ample opportunities to contribute to their schools through cooperative activities and the decision making process of how best to improve their school environments. These cooperative endeavors will likely involve learning to compromise, tolerating differences of opinion, and hard work to turn visions into reality. The civic virtues highlighted in green above, are likely to be developed through such cooperative community service learning projects, where students contribute to their school's sense of place.

As with all environmental effects of learning environments, in which students spend lengthy repeated amounts of time, if the environments contribute to the

development of civic virtues, these virtues will be routinely practiced and their consequent behaviors likely to become civically beneficial habits.

- 6) Successful civic education should provide routine exposure to environments and behaviors that develop democratic civic virtues because habituation is necessary for their development.

Lastly, as can be seen in Chart 8 above, creating a sense of place in American schools has the ability to develop democratic civic virtues within students in a balanced way.

- 7) Civic education should aim to develop democratic virtues within citizens in a balanced way that supports the development of both individual and communal dispositions, thus encouraging a creative dynamic.

Not only will students be likely to develop civic virtues that contribute to communal dispositions, they will also likely develop civic virtues that contribute to their individual dispositions as well. Hence, creating a unique sense of place in American schools can also contribute to the improvement of civic education by encouraging a creative dynamic in its citizens.

All the suggestions made in this section are meant to encourage individuals to think about how they can develop a unique sense of place and belonging within their own schools. Creating beautiful fences, connecting school buildings to their surrounding community and environment, providing a flow between indoor and outdoor spaces, and joining together to celebrate routine festivals as a school community can all aid in building community and creating association. The goal of creating a unique sense of place in schools should be the development of shared values, interests, and aspirations

and the expression and communication of this identity. Ultimately, these suggestions provide concrete ways to develop democratic civic virtues in American schools.

Chapter 9: School Aesthetics: Hearing, Touch, Taste, Smell, and Rhythm

“We sense a place with our whole being”
- Pat Pinciotti (2013)

As the quote by Piniotti, above, indicates, visual aesthetics are not the only influential aesthetics in schools. Because we sense a place with our whole being, school aesthetics that affect each of our senses are important for contributing to the development of democratic civic virtues and thus to the improvement of civic education. In *Feminine to Smell but Masculine to Touch?: Multisensory Congruence and its Effect on the Aesthetic Experience*, Krishna et. al. (2010) “provide evidence that the congruence of multisensory aesthetic inputs contributes to more pleasurable experiences.” This research indicates that in order to create a beautiful or pleasurable school environment, all effects of the environment on student senses should be considered and utilize to create the desired outcome. In this chapter, I discuss school aesthetics that effect students’ hearing, touch, taste, smell, and sense of rhythm. I describe ways for schools to create beneficial aesthetics of these types as well as discussing research to demonstrate the effects such aesthetics can have on the development of civic virtues.

HEARING

While we are often consciously struck most immediately by the visual aesthetics of an environment, another, often unconsidered, yet highly influential, aspect of school

aesthetics is sound. What children hear while they are at school – the auditory aesthetic of the school environment – can have significant and lasting effects on behavior and learning, which can contribute to or deter the development of democratic civic virtues. For students to learn how to communicate effectively with one another, to be able to work together and cooperate in large groups, to maintain individual autonomy, responsibility, and the ability to contribute to the direction of the class as a whole – in order for civic virtues necessary for a democracy to be developed and practiced – classrooms and schools must carefully consider and construct productive auditory environments. These questions should be continually asked of the sounds children experience at school: What effect do these sounds have on the students, their behavior, learning, and development? Is the auditory environment conducive to the lesson or task the children are doing? Is there too much noise? Are the sounds surrounding the children (and produced by the children) increasing the children’s (and the teacher’s) stress levels? Is the noise helping the students to communicate, build relationships, and have meaningful interactions?

Literature on the non-auditory effects of noise generally falls into three categories: physiological effects, motivational effects, and cognitive effects (Evans & Maxwell, 1997). This research finds that noise affects students in many unconscious ways that contribute to changes and deficiencies in their behavior and learning, which are relevant to whether or not they are able to develop democratic civic virtues within school environments. In addition, The World Health Organization warns that...noise-induced

problems can lead to social handicap, reduced productivity, decreased performance in learning, absenteeism in the workplace and school, increased drug use, and accidents (Chepesiuk, 2005).

Noise Volume

Research shows that when there is a high level of noise within schools and classrooms⁸⁰, it produces physical signs of stress within students, such as elevated blood pressure and tensed muscles, and studies show that these physical results are not mitigated with habitual exposure. According to Sheldon Cohen (1980), in *Aftereffects of Stress on Human Performance and Social Behavior: A Review of Research and Theory*, when subjects become stressed – from exposure to things such as loud, uncontrollable noise – they are less likely to help others, show “a decreased sensitivity to others, [as well as] a decrease in the recognition of individual differences, and an increase in aggression” (p. 95). When noisy school environments induce stress within students, the environments are likely to encourage these types of anti-social behaviors. This research shows that contrary to developing and practicing behaviors of care, respect, sympathy, and open-mindedness, as well as other democratic civic virtues, a noisy school environment is likely to promote behaviors that are opposite to these democratically beneficial ones,

⁸⁰ Acoustical performance criteria for schools sets 35 decibels as the maximum for background-noise (ANSI/ASA S12.60-2002:

<http://www.asha.org/public/hearing/American-National-Standard-on-Classroom-Acoustics/>).

However, studies show that environmental noise levels during regular school activities are approximately 4 to 38 decibels above the levels determined to be optimal for speech recognition by normal-hearing children. In these conditions, first graders would recognize only 66% of the words spoken by the teacher (<http://www.acoustics.org/press/133rd/2paaa3.html>).

such as a decreased sensitivity to others, a decrease in recognition of individual differences, and an increase in aggression. In this way, noisy school environments can be destructive to the civic-virtue-developing goals of civic education in schools.

Perhaps most surprising, in addition to causing anti-social behavior, these studies found that noise also changes motivation, determination, and the desire for autonomy and free choice. The motivational effects caused by regular exposure to uncontrollable noise are learned helplessness, lack of persistence, abdication of choice, lack of motivation, and a low tolerance for frustration.

One study found that children attending a school near a major airport were less likely to solve a challenging puzzle and to persist at it as well. Another study found that children exposed to noise were more likely to abdicate their choice for a reward to their teachers. The children decided to let the adult pick a prize for them rather than exercise their option to do so. Teachers in noisy schools also report greater difficulty in motivating children in their schoolwork. Children often had less tolerance for frustration. (Evans & Maxwell, 1997)

These motivational changes are extremely troubling for the success of civic education. In a healthy democracy citizens must have personal motivation and persistence in order to engage in producing positive change. Learned helplessness will produce citizens who are not willing to take responsibility for their lives or the initiative necessary to bring about the changes they wish to see. One of the most essential qualities of a democratic citizen is that he or she be attached to and regularly exercise his or her freewill by making independent choices. Education that produces citizens who are willing to give up their choice, allowing others to choose for them, is not civically successful. These studies reveal that continual exposure to noise has a significantly erosive effect on personal

motivation, persistence, desire for autonomy, and free choice – some of the most basic and essential civic virtues for democracy.

In addition to these physiological and motivational effects, routinely loud noise within classrooms and schools has negative cognitive effects, including a lessened ability to discriminate between meaningful auditory stimuli, poor reading skills, and reduced language skills. All of these effects interfere with communication and the learning of successful communication skills, which are significant for building community, having meaningful interactions, and maintaining democracy. As Supreme Court justice Felix Frankfurter suggested, quiet may be a precondition of democracy. He said, “The men whose labors brought forth the Constitution of the United States had the street outside Independence Hall covered with earth so that their deliberations might not be disturbed by passing traffic....Our democracy presupposes the deliberative process as a condition of thought and of responsible choice by the electorate” (Prochnik, 2013).

If a classroom is too noisy it can prevent discourse. It can become possible to communicate only with the few students directly beside you – if at all – and you are shut off from learning from or hearing the experiences of the students on the other side of the classroom. This type of environment teaches students to subsist within isolated groups and does not promote cooperation or communication within the larger group of students. This research again demonstrates the deleterious effects noisy school environments can have on the development and practice of essential democratic civic virtues such as communication, deliberation, and the skills and virtues necessary for their successful

application. Indicating a need for even greater concern, Dr. Wolfgang Babisch, lead researcher in the field, observes that “there is no physiological habituation to noise. The stress of audible assault affects us psychologically even when we don’t consciously register noise” (Prochnik, 2013). Therefore, for the successful development of democratic civic virtues, as well as many other reasons, noise in schools should be kept within healthy levels.

There are a number of methods that can be employed, in order to reduce the volume of sound to which students are exposed in schools. For example, sound can be reduced by using soft materials and avoiding the design of large, barren, echoing spaces such as hallways and lunchrooms. By creating spaces on a smaller, more personal scale⁸¹ and using soft, noise-reducing materials, the volume of noise can be minimized. When allocating spaces, the intended use and noise of the activity should be considered so that loud activities do not take place directly next to areas requiring quiet, focused attention, or collaborative work. Appropriately directing student activity can also positively affect noise level: by designing hallways and monitoring transitions between classes so that they are filled with conversation and respectful interactions, instead of shouting, pushing, and running, the auditory aesthetics of schools can encourage the development of democratic civic virtues instead of promoting aggressive, anti-social behavior.

The volume of other oratory stimuli should also be considered. For example, startling, loud bells can be replaced by quieter signals that encourage calmer transitions.

⁸¹ See for example *Reducing the Negative Effects of Large Schools*, Duke et al., 2009 for ways to create smaller school groups within larger schools.

Buzzing lights and noisy HVAC systems can be replaced, and the location of new schools carefully chosen so as to minimize noise levels from traffic, airports, and other noise-producing entities. By creating an environment that relaxes instead of stresses children, that provides appropriate time and space for loud, exuberant, outdoor play, and that cultivates respect, communication, and calming quiet acoustic environments conducive to developing relationships and focused attention, schools can transform both themselves and the development of their students in ways that promote and strengthen democratic civic virtues and successful civic education.

Tone and Quality of Sound

Not only does the level of noise within classrooms and schools have an effect on student development but the quality of the sounds to which children are regularly exposed should also be carefully considered and regulated. A study done by O'Leary et al. (1970) compared the effects of teachers giving disruptive students loud and soft reprimands. The data reveals "soft reprimands can be influential in modifying classroom behavior of particularly disruptive children" (p. 151). By alternating between periods of reprimanding disruptive students loudly and periods of using soft reprimands, they show that "if a teacher used soft reprimands, she could use fewer reprimands and obtain better behavior than if she used loud reprimands" (p. 149).

While the study did not attempt to discern why a change in behavior was seen, it seems reasonable to speculate that the quality of voice used by a teacher affects the stress

levels of the teacher, the disruptive student, and the other students in the classroom, as well as affecting the level of respect the teacher feels for and shows the disruptive student. Since changes in stress and respect, among other things, have been shown to affect behavior, it is likely that the difference in behavior seen in students who were reprimanded softly, when compared to students who were reprimanded loudly, was due to a reduction in stress and an increased level of respect present in the interaction between the teacher and the disruptive student. This study shows that the aesthetic tone or quality of sound students are exposed to can also affect their behavior and whether it is disruptive or cooperative, respectful, and caring of others. Therefore, in a classroom environment where disruptive behavior is continually perpetuated by loud disrespectful modes of reprimand, it will be more difficult for civically beneficial behaviors and virtues to develop. However, in classrooms where the acoustics support social, respectful, focused behavior there will be more opportunity for the development of civically positive behavior and dispositions.

Bullying, a form of anti-social and anti-democratic behavior⁸², has become a large concern in many schools. Recent studies show that “bullying behavior is related to high physiological arousal levels (Olweus, 1997; Wilton & Craig, 2000; Woods & White, 2005), and a positive school atmosphere provides a context in which bullying behavior is less likely to occur (Cook et al., 2010; Kasen et al., 2004; Olweus, 1993)” (Ziv & Dolev, 2013). A recent pilot study was done to examine “whether calming background music,

⁸² I assert that bullying is anti-democratic because it is directly in contrast to essential civic virtues such as caring for others, concern for the common good, compassion, civility, and cooperation.

through its effect on arousal and mood, could create a pleasant atmosphere and reduce bullying occurrences” (Ziv & Dolev, 2013, p.83). The results of this study reflect and support the claims I make in this section about the potential benefits or harm caused by the auditory aesthetics of schools. This study was based on the assumption that “one of the most crucial factors to consider in confronting the issue of bullying in schools is fostering a safe school climate that promotes positive interactions among children (Hernandez & Seem, 2004; Nansel et al., 2001)” (Ziv & Dolev, 2013, p. 84). This study tested whether changing the auditory aesthetics of schools could change the school climate in such a way that behaviors among children changed from aggressive and anti-social to positive interactions, which promote the development of democratic civic virtues. This study found that,

Occurrences of direct and indirect bullying were both significantly reduced during the three days when calming background music was played at the school. Furthermore, the participants reported lower levels of arousal and anxiety during recess and enjoyed the recess more with background music...The findings of this article are in line with the findings of previous studies that show music can have a calming effect, reduce anxiety, improve mood, and influence arousal levels (Kain et al., 2001; Knight & Rickard, 2001; Watkins, 1997). (Ziv & Dolev, 2013, p. 87)

The results of this study, along with the previous studies with which this study coincides, demonstrate the significant effect the auditory aesthetics provided to children in schools can have on their mood, stress levels, and behavior. Many current intervention programs “have shifted the emphasis from the treatment of existing problems to the prevention of bullying behavior (Roland, 2000).” And, “whereas, in no way do [these

results] imply that background music is the solution to bullying behavior in schools—the results do suggest that music may be another tool to be used in certain contexts to create a calmer, more positive atmosphere, and influence children’s behavior and feelings to reduce aggressive behavior” (Ziv & Dolev, 2013, p 87).

Similarly, while this research does not show that simply changing the auditory aesthetics within schools will produce better democratic citizens, it does show that what children hear in schools – the volume, tone, and quality – can affect their behavior and can either create environments in which the development of democratic civic virtues are encouraged or significantly hampered. As with the discussion of visual aesthetics, these suggested aesthetic changes to school environments are not independently sufficient to produce successful civic education, but, by lessening anti-social behavior and encouraging civic virtues such as care, cooperation, and respect among children, auditory aesthetics can contribute to the development of civic virtue and through this contribute to the improvement of civic education.

The auditory environments within schools can be improved by considering the effect of all sounds to which children are exposed. By calling noisy students to attention with soft notes played on a recorder, instead of by shouting and desk pounding; by opening the window during a test so that the wind in the leaves can be heard instead of the hum of an old HVAC system; or by playing soothing music or sounds – such as bird songs or ocean waves – the auditory aesthetics of our schools can become beneficial elements, contributing to successful civic education.

TOUCH, TASTE, AND SMELL

In addition to school aesthetics affecting children's senses of sight and hearing, their other senses of touch, smell, and taste, are also affected by school environments; and what they experience through these senses can also have an effect on their ability to engage in activities and behaviors that contribute to the development of democratic civic virtues. Affecting these senses are aspects of the school environment such as the quality of materials used in furniture and toys, environments that actively engage the whole bodies of children, and the way food is used to create a variety of engaging smells, tastes, and textures. The ways these elements of school environments can contribute to, or hinder, the development of democratic civic virtues is similar to the way visual and auditory aesthetics can affect the development of these virtues: especially in aggregate, aspects of school environments that negatively affect the senses heighten stress, discomfort, disconnection, disengagement, and a lack of awareness in children, all of which contribute to anti-social and undemocratic behavior and habits. In contrast, environmental aesthetics can be consciously designed so that they positively affect student senses by decreasing stress, engaging interest, encouraging participation, defining positive usage of space, and evoking care and connection, all of which allow for, or directly encourage, the development of democratic civic behavior and habits.

Touch

Children's comfort and stress levels, and hence their behavior patterns and actions, can also be affected by what they experience through their sense of touch. Soft materials, comfortable furniture, natural materials, and the use of wood within classrooms can all aid in making a classroom more comfortable and conducive to relaxed, cooperative, communal interactions. Thinking about what children will experience in a classroom through their sense of touch is not a common consideration when designing classrooms. However, research shows that something as seemingly arbitrary as the material used to produce furniture and toys can have a real and significant effect on stress. In *Wood in the Human Environment: Restorative Properties of Wood in the Built Indoor Environment*, Davit Robert Fell (2010) found that when furniture is made of wood it both reduces stress and helps people recover from stress faster and better than when furniture is made of other materials.



Photographs 122 and 123: Studies show that wooden furniture can help reduce stress and improve recovery time from stress. Using wooden furniture instead of plastic/metal furniture is one way to gain the benefits identified by these studies in classrooms.

This study suggests that by providing students with wooden chairs and desks instead of plastic and metal amalgamations⁸³, and by providing wooden toys instead of plastic ones, the environment can decrease stress and help students recover from stress, which will, in

⁸³ In designing student furniture there are also other important factors not discussed here, such as the scale, comfort, and ergonomic qualities of the furniture, which should be considered.

turn, provide an environment in which civic virtues such as care, connection, cooperation, and engagement⁸⁴ are much more likely to be promoted, practiced, and developed.

The very different feelings and experience evoked by the two shelves of toys below exemplify the difference that can be caused by the materials used in classrooms.



Photographs 124 and 125: Wooden shelves filled with wooden toys and other natural materials create a very different aesthetic, and encourage different behaviors, than metal shelves and brightly colored plastic toys.

There is a significantly different impression and feel evoked by these two shelves of toys.

The wire shelving on the right, with conventional, plastic toys is bright, stimulating, and filled with rough, hard-edged, unforgiving toys, while the wooden shelving on the left has toys with soft, natural tones, and soft, curving edges. These two different tactile experiences are likely to evoke very different feelings and behaviors from children, because children are so acutely attuned to the quality of their surroundings. The wood is calming, the plastic toys are stimulating. Being in a constant state of arousal, caused by over-stimulating environments does not provide the calm, trust, or quite necessary to

⁸⁴ These civic virtues – and others like them - are in direct contrast to the negative characteristics correlated with stressful environments.

develop opinions, creativity, effective communication, or conjoint activity so necessary for the health of our democracy.

In looking to apply the results of a 2011 literature review to schools, covering 15 years of research on the beneficial effects of wood, plants, and nature, Stephen Fraser (2011) suggests the following:

If students were exposed to stress reducers on a daily basis in the interior environment, this could potentially lead to lower rates of dropout, bullying and even suicide. Furthermore, stress reduction is only one of the many tested health benefits of wood and plants in the human environment. Consider the ramifications if schools were purposely fitted with wood products, interior plants, views of nature and finished with wood. The benefits of improved creativity, mood and sense of well-being, increased attentional recovery and task performance could simply improve a student's day or go as far as to improving their test scores. The benefits of wood in schools are completely untested, however, with so many studies indicating an array of positive outcomes...why should it be any different in a school setting? (p. 18)

The studies reviewed by Fraser and the conclusions he draws support my argument that the use of wood in schools can contribute to the development of democratic civic virtues. As discussed in Chapter 4, stress can cause anti-democratic behavior, such as a decrease in concentration, a decrease in self-control, a decreased sensitivity to others, a decrease in the recognition of individual differences, the development of personal helplessness, less inclination to help others, and increased aggression. Additionally, reactions and behaviors that are routinely practiced commonly develop into habituated patterns of behavior. Hence, it seems reasonable to conclude – although studies explicitly testing this hypothesis in schools have not been done – that school environments that limit these negative effects and habituated modes of behavior could also have a positive effect on the development of

opposite, civically supportive dispositions, such as patience, persistence, self-control, caring for others, awareness, concern for the common good, compassion, generosity, civility, toleration of diversity, open-mindedness, civic-mindedness, connection, respect for others, freedom, individuality, self-direction, and active determination. Whether or not learning environments that contain wood can actively develop these civic virtues, it is clear that wood can contribute to environments that do not actively prevent the development of these virtues. Thus, in at least this way, the inclusion of wood in schools is an aesthetic that can benefit civic education.

A child's sense of touch is also related to movement and activity level. Environments that engage the entire body of a child in an active way provide more engagement and induce greater participation than static environments that encourage children to remain sedentary. Including stairs, slides, slopes, climbing walls, and a variety of textural experiences within schools would enliven the environment and engage student's entire bodies through their active participation. Imagine if our school hallways incorporated aspects of the environments shown below.



Photographs 126 and 127: By providing opportunities for students to engage their entire bodies in learning environments, both indoors and out, civic virtues such as engagement, awareness, and participation can be developed and increased.

Just imagine the development of engagement, cooperation, awareness, participation, and self-direction that could be developed if the hallways of schools contained such engaging features or had textural, calming elements such as those in the images below.



Photographs 127 and 129: School hallways with colored windows, ample natural light, wooden storage spaces, and observation points of animals and natural environments can contribute to the development of democratic civic virtues in schools between classes.

By considering children's sense of touch and how environments can be crafted to affect them positively, we can create school environments that provide vastly more opportunity for the development of cooperation, self-direction, engagement, participation, persistence, connection, creativity, adaptability, self-control, respect, and other valuable civic virtues, than is currently provided by most school environments.

Smell and Taste

Student's senses can also be activated and engaged in a positive way by using food as a rich resource for connecting children to their environment. How different would a child's experience of school be if his sense of smell was awakened and pleased by the scent of fresh baking bread during his morning classes?



Photograph 130: The smell of baking bread in schools can increase student awareness, increase engagement of the senses, and connect students to their school environment.

Or by the smell of Minestrone soup before lunch on a cold afternoon?



Photograph 131: Freshly cooked food at schools can heighten student awareness and engage their senses both through its aroma while cooking and its taste when eaten.

It is not our first instinct to think of freshly baked bread and minestrone soup as a foundation upon which a strong and healthy democracy can be built. However, as I show throughout this dissertation, environments that alienate, isolate, and cause stress within

children encourage anti-social behavior and create habits that are anti-democratic such as helplessness, close-mindedness, antipathy, disengagement, and a lack of care and participation. Contrary to such environments, if we consciously design our schools to communicate a unique sense of place; to provide comfort, connection, and respect; and to encourage engagement, care, and a sense of belonging and responsibility, we can positively contribute to the development of democratic virtues. In this way, awakening children's sense of smell, joyful anticipation, and connection to their school and class-community through the use of pleasing olfactory stimulus and taste – such as baking bread and homemade soup – can, in fact, play a role in developing democratic behaviors and habits.

Children have five senses through which they experience the aesthetics of their school environments. As The Broken Window Theory and the other more specific and pin-pointed research referenced throughout this dissertation show, the information children take in through their senses affects both their conscious experiences and their stress levels; both of which contribute to their behavior, and if repeated over a prolonged period of time, to their future behavior, through habituation. When designing our schools we must consider the effects every aesthetic aspect of the environments will have on our children, because these aesthetics have the ability to promote and develop, or avert and harm, behaviors and characteristics that should be developed by successful civic education.

RHYTHM

In addition to being affected through their five senses, students can also be affected by the rhythm, or lack of rhythm, present in their school days, weeks, and year. Rhythm is an aesthetic aspect of school environments that is recognized and consciously designed even less frequently than the other aesthetic characteristics discussed in this chapter. The rhythm of the school day, how the students transition from one activity to another, and the balance between physical activities and those that require quite attention, each contribute to the overall aesthetic, or feel, of a classroom and a school, and affect the behavior encouraged in students. In addition to “the physical space, [the environment] includes the way time is structured and the roles we are expected to play. It conditions how we feel, think, and behave; and it dramatically affects the quality of our lives.⁸⁵”

All schools have a rhythm of sorts, by virtue of having a regular routine. However, “[n]ot all activities, done regularly, constitute a sense of rhythm. After all, a strict regimen is rhythmic, but only in the driest, most lifeless meaning of the word. A rhythm’s value comes from the intentions behind it” (Payne & Ross, 2009, p. 108). In other words, although most schools have schedules – a routine start time, a pattern of classes, a regular time for lunch and recess, etc. – the flow and shape of these schedules are often relatively unconscious and determined merely by an effort to economize space and time. Such an unintentional rhythm is weak, underdeveloped, and just as likely to have negative effects on students as positive consequences.

⁸⁵ <http://www.archi-ninja.com/the-third-teacher/> (Quote attributed to designer and education theorist, Jim Greenman).

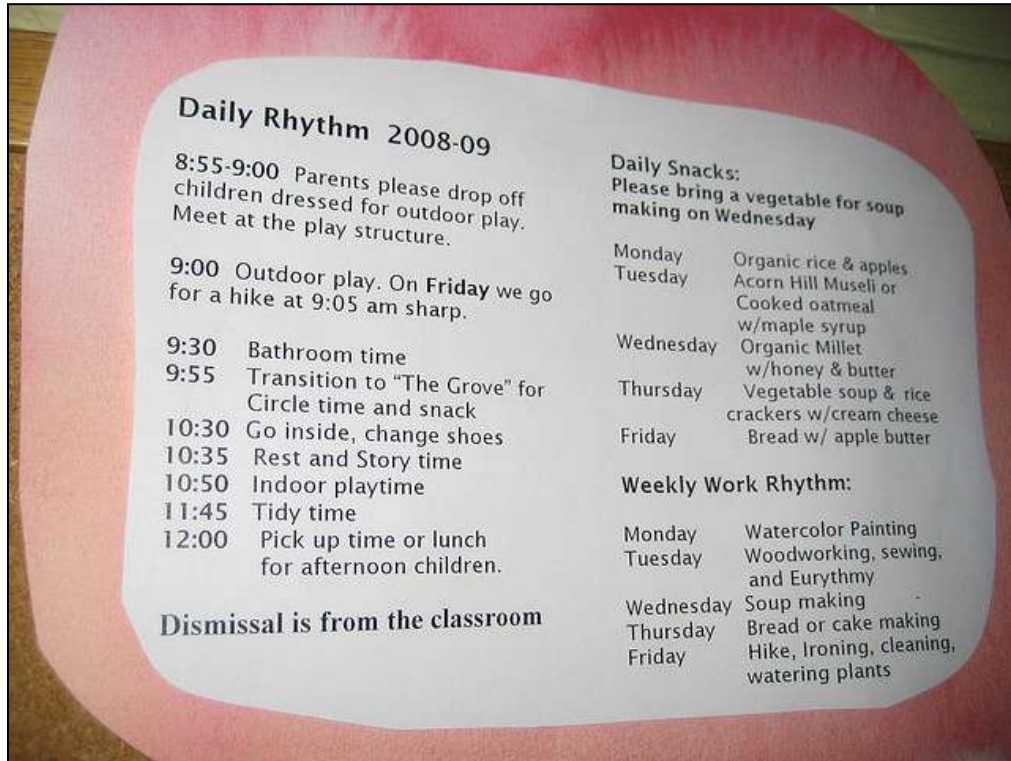
How *does* ‘rhythm’ differ from ‘schedule’? A schedule is a list of planned events with times assigned to each. These events need have no relation to each other aside from following a prescribed sequence. There is a definite end to one activity and a beginning of the next (as in some schools when a bell signals the change of classes). Rhythm, on the other hand, implies a flowing quality of movement from one activity into another; the movement and sequence are not arbitrary, but are governed by the internal quality of the activities themselves. (Foster, n.d.)

Rhythm can be described in many ways:

- “any kind of movement characterized by the regular recurrence of strong and weak elements, e.g. the rhythm of the tides;”
- “the regular patterned flow, the ebb and rise, of sounds and movement in speech, music, writing, dance, and other physical activities, and in natural phenomena, e.g. the rhythm of the heart;”
- “breathing, with its contraction and expansion;”
- “a gently rolling landscape” (Foster, n.d.).

Regardless of which image you choose, “the characteristic of the image will be that there are no abrupt stops and starts, no tidal waves which come crashing out of control, or precipices over which one may fall. Rather, there is a regular rise and fall, expansion and contraction” (Foster, n.d.). A rhythmic quality can be developed within schools by nesting smaller rhythms within larger ones. The way elements of a particular lesson fit together and the way each class begins and ends – the in and out breath of the lesson – can be nested within the context of the rhythm of the day and how all the classes fit together. The rhythm of each day can then be nested within the rhythm of the week and how days fit and flow together, and the weeks can be nested within the greater rhythms of

the year and seasons. Below is an example of these aspects consciously designed and practiced in a Waldorf Kindergarten:



Photograph 132: Waldorf Schools pay special attention to the rhythm of classes throughout the day, activities throughout the week, and celebrations throughout the year.

On this display we can see a daily rhythm that carefully considers transitions and the placement of activities in relation to one another, along with a weekly rhythm for meals and work.

Why precisely is rhythm so important for children and how exactly does it relate to the development of democratic civic virtues? To begin with, “rhythm builds islands of consistency and security throughout the day” (Payne & Ross, 2009, p.106). This means that something as simple as saying the same poem at the beginning of every day, or having an orderly and specific way of entering the classroom and storing belongings, or

regularizing how meals are prepared and eaten, etc. can increase children's sense of security through consistency, and this can lead to less stress, less anxiety, and, consequently, less anti-social behavior.

The islands of consistency and security that rhythm builds throughout the day are like breaths. Such intervals allow a child's brain to maintain balance, and to flow through its willing, thinking, and feeling centers. If constantly on the run, and always reacting to changing circumstances, a child will default, or return mentally to a form of amygdale hijack. They operate from the part of the brain that is quick to react, but less able to consider things thoroughly or flexibly. (Payne & Ross, 2009, p.107)

Interestingly, this means that by creating routine and consistency, students become more flexible: they become able to consider things thoroughly, be open-minded, make changes, compromise, and think of others. When there is no rhythm, little consistency, and only an unconscious and disjointed schedule, children are constantly on the defensive, either hyper vigilant and controlling or tuning out. It is a function of our brains that when children are on the run, overly stimulated, and defensive, the amygdale – or primitive, reptilian brain stem – controls their behavior⁸⁶. The problem with inducing the brain to react in this way is that behaviors and virtues necessary for a healthy democracy require higher functioning of the brain. Rational thought, flexibility, open-mindedness, action controlled by principles, among many other characteristics of civic virtue, require the rational brain, and the function of the rational brain requires limited stress, calm, and space. These qualities can be contributed to schools by consciously designing the rhythm of each day, week, and year.

⁸⁶ *Understanding the Stress Response*, March 2011.
http://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletters/Harvard_Mental_Health_Letter/2011/March/understanding-the-stress-response.

Rhythm also provides a specific time and place for recognizing and building community and connection (Payne & Ross, 2009, p. 102). Making the time for welcoming students into a classroom, for packing up before the bell rings and reflecting on the class, or for checking in with one another before starting a group activity, all recognize the need for interaction between students and teachers and provide the space and time for intentional cultivation of these connections and the strengthening of community. “In addition to consistency, the best daily life rhythms offer connection.” For, “it is often in the intervals – the spaces between activities – that relationships are built.” (Payne & Ross, 2009, pp. 108-9) For example,

One of the simplest, purest forms of stability or predictability in daily life is politeness. It is a level of communication and interaction that can be counted on, that builds trust. When you ask me for something, you say ‘please’; when I respond to your request, you say ‘thank you,’ and I say ‘you’re welcome.’ What could be more predictable? In the flow of the day’s words, noises, shouts, and various utterances, this polite exchange stands out for children like a nursery rhyme, secure and familiar. It is also a code. In its regularity, politeness affirms and reaffirms our connections; the way we treat each other....Politeness is one of the simplest ways to establish a base beat of predictability in the home [or school]. Points of politeness throughout the day are like the lights of a suspension bridge, securing and connecting. (Payne & Ross, 2009, p. 103)

This unique example of rhythm established through manners and predictability in daily life, helps to emphasize how small, simple routines within the school day can help to create a focus and structure in which children feel secure and connected. This kind of consistency and awareness contributes to the development of democratic civic virtues such as civility, awareness, and connection, and enables students to extend their attention to the development of other behaviors and characteristics beneficial to democracy. When

there is a conscious rhythm there is space for self-direction, self-discipline, freedom, responsibility, and respect.

Unfortunately and destructively, however, even basic civility is routinely transgressed in most schools. There is no time for welcoming or saying goodbye, there is little time to use the bathroom, and the comfort and feelings of students are often completely ignored. In contrast, a rhythmic school day respects children as thinking, feeling, free human beings who register experiences across time and place, as opposed to unthinking machines that are meant to be turned off and on with a switch. Rhythm contributes to a school environment that treats children as free humans, who need continuity and smooth transition in order to make sense of life, to be motivated, conscious, and caring.

It is also the case that rarely is much thought given to how classes should be presented in relation to one another throughout the school day, so that physically active classes and those that require more engagement and participation are interspersed between classes that require students to be quiet, still, and intellectually focused. By considering the relationship and flow between classes and over the course of a day – and week – a rhythm can be created that optimally supports student attention, engagement, and development (Barros et al., 2009). By balancing close, intellectual engagement, with more expressive and self-directed activities, students can remain fresh, engaged, and cooperative in ways that are unlikely if they spend either too long doing activities of one type or are not given a sufficient amount of time to fully become immersed and engaged

in an activity or lesson. Current school schedules often provide classes that are either too long or too short, resulting in a conglomeration of fits and starts interspersed among lengthy vistas devoid of lively energy and attention, all of which can increase stress within students and decrease connection to and care for their work and environment, resulting in a diminished ability to develop and practice democratic civic virtues such as patience, persistence, connection, deliberation, rational self-direction, the capacity for reason-giving, strong work-ethic, creativity, and the ability to postpone gratification.

The way in which the transition between classes is handled within most schools also erodes the benefits of a consciously developed and intentionally practiced rhythm. The beginning and end of classes are rarely recognized and honored as periods of transition. The beginning and end of classes are usually marked by nothing more than a loud bell followed by the chaotic shuffling of papers and rush of students from one place to another. Students are expected to traverse often crowded and unfriendly halls, file into uncomfortable classrooms, and immediately focus and learn, without any aid in making this transition. The end of classes is often equally rushed and abrupt: the content of class continues until the last second without a proper closing to the lesson and without any time for reflection and enjoyment of the lessons learned or tasks completed. When school days are comprised of a rush from one point to another without any room for reflection, pause for gathering of attention and focus, or explicit recognition of the natural rhythm involved in beginning and ending an activity, children's integrity as human beings is lost and their treatment and schedule differ little from the herding of animals.

If children are expected to develop personal traits of expression and communication while also engaging in conjoint activity and the recognition of their connection to and effects on one another, they must be given the space, time, and appropriate circumstances to do this. Reflection, creativity, and open-mindedness; cooperation, compromise, and adaptability; toleration of diversity, the disposition to put principles into practice, and the discernment and respect of the rights of others, are exceedingly unlikely to develop in an environment where transitions and rhythm are ignored, because it is in these spaces between activities, these moments of rest and reflection, that allow us the space, calm, dignity, and awareness we need to reflect on our actions and to set our intentions for the future. Without the space for intention, awareness, and encouragement, children cannot be expected to develop the capacities necessary for an engaged, participatory, democratic life.

An ideal democracy requires constant creation and re-creation by its citizens, and it is this toward which our civic education should be striving. Having a rhythm within schools and classrooms requires the consistent, conscious creation of space, routine, and community. It provides a regular example and experience of creation, showing that there is thoughtful, intentional, conscious, caring direction of the environment and development of children: “The implication of rhythms is that there is an “author’ behind how we do things” (Foster, n.d.).

While, as Payne and Ross (2009) say, “the magic of rhythm is in the process, not the particulars” (p. 114), the awareness and incorporation of certain things can aid in the

cultivation and creation of rhythm within schools. Through the use of verses, songs, and routines, transitions can be made less abrupt and consciously tailored to optimize social interaction, focused attention, or engagement and participation. By having a consistent opening and closing of activities instead of having abrupt starts and stops, students can be calmed and their behavior productively directed. For example, if a specific song is always song when young children are meant to clean up their toys and transition into circle time, then simply by virtue of singing this song, productive, cooperative, helpful behavior and contributing activity can be encouraged. Likewise, if a particular poem evoking attention and intellectual awareness is said at the beginning of each high-school English class, simply by virtue of reciting this verse together every day, students can be lead to smoothly transition from socializing with friends to engaging in discussion of the reading assignments. Flowers on the table during meal time, changing into slippers when entering the classroom, and chores at the end of the school day, can all contribute to a calm, engaging, rhythmic school experience.

By incorporating nature within schools, the cycles and rhythms of the natural world can also beneficially influence the flow of school days, weeks, and months. By honoring and experiencing natural rhythms such as light and dark, day and night, the change of seasons, and the progression of growth and death, children can be consistently awakened to the world around them and engaged in the conscious utilization of these elements in crafting their environments. Many traditionally ignored aesthetic aspects of school environments, such as rhythm, contribute to the overall experience of children

within schools, and these experiences – both the conscious and unconscious – contribute to student behavior and the development of future behavior patterns. In order to create schools in which democratic civic virtues are practiced, strengthened, and developed school design should consider all the aesthetic aspects of school environments discussed in this chapter.

BATHROOMS

School bathrooms provide an example of an often overlooked aspect of school environments that can contribute to the prevention or encouragement of students developing democratic civic virtues. By discussing how the aesthetics of school bathrooms can be improved, I demonstrate how the aesthetic suggestions made previously in this dissertation can be applied to the improvement of a specific school facility.

Like that of the rest of the school environment, bathroom placement and design can also play a role in creating or preventing negative social interactions and student and teacher stress. For example, bullying often occurs in isolated bathrooms, which are often placed at relatively long distances from classrooms, causing students to miss important academic content in order to take care of bodily needs. “So why don’t we have more toilets? Or toilets in every classroom?” Uptis (2010) asks. “The short answer, of course, is that plumbing is complicated and expensive. And yet, if we were to factor in the costs that are more difficult to quantify – teacher time spent on patrolling and maintaining

toilets and the social costs paid by students, perhaps classroom toilets would not be so extravagant after all. It comes down to what we value” (p. 18). And if we value the development of democratic civic virtues – such as care, connection, responsibility, awareness, and the ability to discern and respect the rights of others – something as seemingly minor as the aesthetics of school bathrooms matters:

School walls, floors, toilet stalls, etc. in disrepair are not only physical phenomena, they are also conditions created in social and cultural contexts that produce collective and individual meaning. A broken toilet that is not fixed speaks of the level of concern and care of those responsible for the school facilities. Through daily interactions with the physical and social environment individuals learn about their place in society, their value, appropriate and inappropriate behavior, etc. . . . Schools should be places where children feel safe, valued, and taken care of. Environmental connotations of abandonment such as in ‘scary’ classrooms or bathrooms can be integrated into youth’s self-concept at a critical time of their development.” (Duran-Narucki, 2008, p. 284)

Hence, ugly or intimidating environments – such as a large, unsupervised, cold, vandalism-prone bathroom, where students are vulnerable because they are forced to do something private in a public space – are likely to create stress in students and thus to inspire anti-social behaviors. Far from helping to develop and promote democratic civic virtues, normal school bathrooms, like those shown below, are likely to encourage contrary behaviors.



Photographs 133 and 134: Traditional school bathrooms are cold, harsh, impersonal spaces that are often placed far from classrooms, left unsupervised, and subject to vandalism.

To counteract this effect, we can build and design school bathrooms in a way that takes privacy, warmth, comfort, proximity, and the effects of the environment on students' five senses into consideration.

Children and teachers spend the entire day at school, and should not be uncomfortable or unnecessarily vulnerable every time they need to use the bathroom. Having smaller bathrooms attached to each classroom or small grouping of classrooms is one way to improve bathroom comfort, safety, and access. This placement of bathrooms would also allow for the design of smaller, more private bathrooms that could be designed to incorporate important aesthetic characteristics suggested previously, such as simplicity, natural light, a unified aesthetic, and natural materials such as wood and plants, as shown in the image below:



Photograph 135: Private bathrooms attached to classrooms or groups of classrooms would allow the school bathrooms to be more personal and aesthetically pleasing, incorporating plants, natural light, and wood.

Bathrooms could also be brightened and made more inviting through the use of artwork, artistic design, and color, as seen in the next example:



Photograph 136: School bathrooms can be improved with the addition of art and color.

Order, warmth, and unique designs could also be implemented to make school bathrooms more enjoyable, supporting, and comfortable environments:



Photograph 137: Incorporating unique design, color, and artwork can bring character and warmth to school bathrooms, making them comfortable environments that promote civic virtues and prevent negative behavior such as bullying and student aggression.

Aside from these visual considerations, the aesthetics of bathrooms that effect students' other senses should also be considered. Soft materials such as curtains, rugs, or wall hangings can be used to decrease echo and loud noises in bathroom spaces. Controlling smell, water temperature, and the aesthetics of toilet paper, soap, and towels should also be consciously considered for their aesthetic effects on students.

Smaller, beautiful, and comfortable bathrooms can also contribute to a sense of ownership and responsibility in students for this integral space. Because smaller, more private bathrooms are easier to clean and maintain than large communal bathrooms, common problems, such as dirty and vandalized bathroom space, would also be

prevented more easily, resulting in less physical and social damage done to the school, the teachers, and the students. By eliminating dirty, poorly-maintained, large, cold, harsh environments in our schools, Americans can start to create learning environments that support and encourage the development of social, democratic virtues in every part our schools.

This discussion of the aesthetics of school bathrooms again highlights how important seemingly small and insignificant aspects of the school environment can be for fostering an atmosphere conducive to the development of democratic civic virtues. There is no part of a school environment that does not contribute to the learning and development of the students, and for this reason, those in charge of crafting the school environment must themselves become aware of the message each corner and cranny of the school is sending, purposefully creating the environment so that what is communicated to and encouraged in children is intentional, in-line with the educational goals of the school, and beneficial for the development of democratic civic virtues.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIONS

One potential objection to the suggestions I make for improving school aesthetics is that it will increase the work of teachers. In some sense, the suggestions I am making will require teachers to become environmental managers. However, currently, teachers are already responsible for decorating and maintaining their classrooms throughout the year. As it is, little support, guidance, or resources are provided to teachers for carrying

out this task. If the perspective I am advocating – that the aesthetics of school environments are important for guiding student behavior, habituation, and the development of dispositions or virtues essential to democracy – then, while teachers would play an integral role in the creation and maintenance of school environments, the vital importance of this work would be recognized and requisite funding, support, and guidance would be provided. All things considered, the changes I am advocating would likely lead to teachers having greater authority, creativity, and respect, as well as recognition for how important every aspect of their job is. Currently maintaining the classroom environment is not relegated the respect or support it deserves, because the pedagogical and social benefits of this process have not been clearly recognized.

A second potential problem with my suggestions may be implied by the research of Cost and McCrae (1984) who found that women are more aware of and affected by the indoor aesthetic components of rooms than men. This research indicates that aesthetics may not have the same effect, or the same strength of effect, on all people. My response to this potential problem is that it does seem likely that different people, or different classes of people based on age, sex, or cultural background, may be affected by environmental aesthetics in different ways or with varying degrees of strength. The potential for this difference highlights the great need we have for better, more comprehensive, and unified research on the effects of school aesthetics on children – which takes age, sex, and cultural differences, among other factors, into account.

Throughout this dissertation I have shown that a good argument can be made for the importance of school aesthetics on student behavior and the development of democratic civic virtues. However, available research is lacking and much of it is so cursory that one study can often appear to contradict another. For example, in contrast to the research of Costa and McCrae (1984) Shibata and Suzuki (2002) found that the effect of plants in indoor environments was stronger on men than on women, indicating an opposite bias of affect. Hopefully my dissertation can be a starting point, leading readers to recognize the great importance of school environments and inspiring further research and studies on the effects these environments have on student behavior and development.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have shown that by consciously designing school environments so that they are pleasing to students' hearing, touch, taste, smell, and sense of rhythm, beautiful learning environment can be created that beneficially contribute to the development of democratic civic virtues. I have also provided many specific examples of how such aesthetics can be created in American schools. In addition to developing democratic civic virtues, these aesthetics can also contribute to the improvement of civic education by meeting many of the characteristics identified in previous chapters as criteria of successful civic education programs. I discuss the ways these aesthetics can meet these criteria in what follows:

In the same way that creating beautiful visual aesthetics, both on the inside and outside of schools, meets the first criteria identified for successful civic education, creating pleasing aesthetics for the rest of students' senses also meets this criteria:

- 1) General goals and methods for civic education should be provided but these should be flexible enough that the specifics of each school's needs, values, and inspirations can determine the details of the programs, and so each program can change as needed to address new problems and needs.

Approaching the improvement of civic education through aesthetic improvement allows general goals and methods for civic education – through the development of civic virtues – to be provided while allowing the execution of these methods to be flexible and the specifics determined by each school. While this chapter identifies pleasing school aesthetics as important for the development of democratic civic virtues, the details of the way each school creates these aesthetics can and should vary from school to school and change in order to address emergent problems and issues. For this reason, among others, school aesthetics are an extremely well-suited way to approach the improvement of civic education.

The second characteristic of successful civic education is:

- 2) Ideals for our civic education programs should be cherished as leading to ever greater improvement. Although perfection should not be the goal, high objectives and standards are still essential to achieve improvement.

This chapter as well as the two preceding chapters, provides just this, ideals for the improvement of civic education programs. While it is unlikely that any school will implement all the suggestions in this dissertation, the suggestions provide a helpful

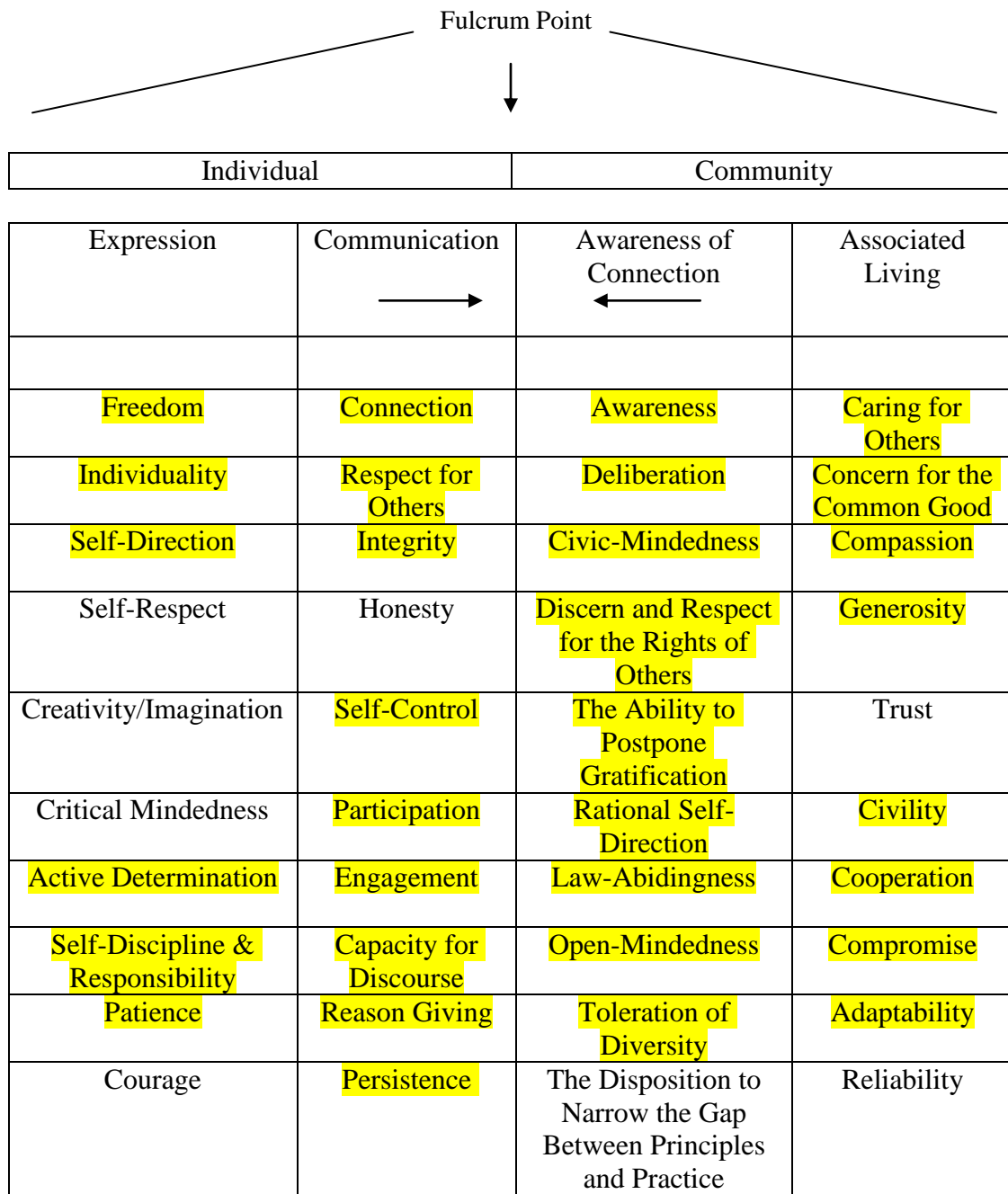
objective and standard by which to guide and inspire the improvement of civic education in American schools.

Throughout this chapter I have discussed research indicating the ways school aesthetics can contribute to the development of civic virtues and a democratic way of being.

- 3) Civic education should focus on developing behaviors and traits that affect citizens' "ways of life," such that they embody a democratic way of being exemplified by awareness, participation, and engagement, through dispositions necessary for citizens to express themselves, communicate their experiences, live and work in association with others, and be conscious of the connection between their actions and the well-being of others.

The democratic civic virtues, developed by the aesthetics discussed in this chapter, are highlighted below in Chart 9:

Chart 9: Democratic Civic Virtues Developed by Beautiful Aesthetics Affecting Hearing, Touch, Taste, Sound, and Sense of Rhythm



While I do not discuss the ways in which the aesthetic improvements in this chapter can be created and maintained by students, the improvement of school environments provide exemplary opportunities for student participation and engagement in cooperative projects to improve and support the community, meeting characteristics 4 and 5:

- 4) Civic education programs should provide opportunities for students to contribute to others, their school, and the wider community by partaking in community service learning and contributing to communal celebrations and festivals.
- 5) Civic education should include many opportunities for students to participate in cooperative learning activities where they have ample opportunities to evaluate different options, work together with other students, and find mutually satisfying solutions.

As with all environmental effects of learning environments, in which students spend lengthy repeated amounts of time, if the environments contribute to the development of civic virtues, these virtues will be routinely practiced and their consequent behaviors likely to develop into civically beneficial habits.

- 6) Successful civic education should provide routine exposure to environments and behaviors that develop democratic civic virtues because habituation is necessary for their development.

This outcome is especially likely when aesthetics that affect a wide array of senses have been intentionally created.

Lastly, as can be seen in Chart 9 above, creating a sense of place in American schools has the ability to develop democratic civic virtues in students in a balanced way.

- 7) Civic education should aim to develop democratic virtues within citizens in a balanced way that supports the development of both individual and communal dispositions, thus encouraging a creative dynamic.

Not only will students be likely to develop civic virtues that contribute to communal dispositions, they will also likely develop civic virtues that contribute to their individual dispositions as well. Hence, consciously crafting all aspects of school aesthetics so that they have a beneficial effect on student senses can also contribute to the improvement of civic education by encouraging a creative dynamic in its citizens.

When children spend the majority of their waking hours each day at school, the environment in which they live, learn, and develop can have a significant effect on their behavior and on the dispositions they continue to exhibit throughout their lives. While further research on the direct effects of specific aesthetic characteristics would greatly add to our ability to create schools that successfully cultivate civic virtues, there is sufficient research to be certain that the aesthetics of school environment can play a significant role in determining behavior. By increasing or decreasing stress levels within children, by inspiring awareness or disconnection, by engaging or turning children off, and by connecting children to their environment and community or alienating and isolating them, the aesthetics of school environments can either promote or harm the development of civic virtues, which support individual expression, successful communication, associated living, and an awareness of the connection between individual activities. In this way, as well as by meeting the criteria for successful civic education, by paying attention to the aesthetic details of our schools and by carefully experimenting with and observing the consequences of how different aesthetics affect student senses, we can create school environments that successfully advance the health of our democracy.

Chapter 10: Nature

“I thank you God for this most amazing day, for the leaping greenly spirits of trees, and
for the blue dream of sky and for everything which is natural,
which is infinite, which is yes.”

– e.e. Cummings

One of the areas of environmental aesthetics that has been most extensively researched is the study of nature’s effects on behavior. This chapter discusses this research and provides examples of how nature can be incorporated on school grounds and in classrooms. Aside from the independent benefits of nature, incorporating nature in schools also contributes to the other aesthetic benefits discussed in Chapters 7, 8, and 9: incorporating nature in schools creates beautiful visual aesthetics, contributes to the creation of a unique sense of place, ties the school to its ecological surroundings, provides multi-sensory experiences including a wide array of sounds, textures, smells, and tastes, and exposes students to the rhythms of nature, providing a template on which to tie other school rhythms, celebrations, and festivals. Consequently, in addition to the ways discussed in this chapter, the implementation of nature in schools can also contribute to the improvement of civic education and the development of civic virtues by contributing to the beneficial aesthetics discussed in previous chapters.

Despite the evidence this chapter provides, some readers may be skeptical that exposure to trees and flowers can lead to civic behaviors such as writing opinion letters to editors on public issues or organizing one’s neighbors to discuss and vote on a local referendum. As discussed concerning other school aesthetics in the previous chapters, the incorporation of nature in schools will not, in and of itself, lead directly to ensuring the

future participation and engagement of students in civic activity. The effects of nature on students are more subtle. The research below provides evidence that increased time spent in nature can contribute to a reduction of behavioral problems, bullying, and school violence, as well as leading to the development of motivation, personal responsibility, self-discipline, civic-mindedness, respect, tolerance, empathy, and community-building. By creating environments that discourage anti-democratic and anti-social behaviors such as bullying, vandalism, and violence, and that instead encourage democratic dispositions such as self-discipline, respect, and empathy, students are given the chance to develop these essential civic virtues and to practice their implementation until they become habitual ways of being. As with the research discussed in previous chapters, a direct causal mechanism for this correlation has not been clearly specified,⁸⁷ however, this does not make the research demonstrating correlation any weaker, nor does it make the

⁸⁷ As with all topics involving environmental aesthetics, the way nature effects human behavior is complex and the causal mechanisms extensive. The following two studies – although not targeted at understanding the effects of nature – provide unique examples of ways the environment can affect our physiology (and subsequently probably our psychology and behavior as well) that most people have never even considered.

Researchers in Hanns Hatt's lab at Germany's Ruhr University Bochum have identified scent receptors in the skin. These scent receptors trigger cell division and migration and contribute to increased healing and repair of the skin when they "smell" synthetic sandalwood oil

(<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/next/body/skin-can-smell/>). Equally fascinating, Francis McGlone and his colleagues have found that stroking hairy skin – such as that found on the arms and face – trigger parts of the brain responsible for emotional processing, whereas stroking hairless parts – such as the palm – stimulates non-emotional parts of the brain. This finding lead researchers to believe that certain types of touch are related to the development of human's ability to process emotion – especially during infancy (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/next/body/clue-to-autisms-roots-could-lie-beneath-the-skin/>).

These two examples begin to indicate just how complicated human connection to the environment is. If our skin's ability to heal itself is affected by surrounding scents and certain types of touch can affect the way we process emotions, then the complexity of interactions with, and effects of, environmental aesthetics on humans is likely astronomical. Consequently, the causal mechanisms by which time spent in nature can affect human behavior are likely to be numerous and multi-faceted, likely involving full-bodied responses that include obscure effects of physiological traits such as skin olfactory receptors.

research less useful for considering how the environments of American schools can be used to improve civic education.

While developing a democratic way of being in the world, that entails personal responsibility, tolerance, and consideration for the rights and needs of others, for example, will not necessitate that someone participates civically in their community it is unlikely that *without* the development of such traits someone will be inclined or able to engage politically *in a democratically beneficial way*⁸⁸. It is in this oblique manner that the incorporation of nature in schools can lead to the improvement of civic education: Nature helps to create environments in which the development of civic virtues is encouraged. Since the development of civic virtues is a necessary component of successful civic education – along with civic knowledge and civic skills – civic education can be strengthened in schools that provide adequate exposure to nature.

Unfortunately, research suggests that children are spending far less time outdoors in wild, natural environments – especially on their own – than they used to (Cunningham, Jones & Taylor, 1994; Freeman, 1995; Gaster, 1991; Malone, 2001; Rivkin, 1997). This

⁸⁸ In America it is not uncommon for someone to participate politically without the motivation of civic virtues but instead for the sole purpose of individual and economic gain. This political participation however, I do not classify as healthy democratic citizenship, nor should it be what our civic education programs aim to create. Democratically beneficial civic engagement goes well beyond lobbying or voting merely for personal desires or gains. Rather, a healthy democratic citizen should consistently balance his personal needs, desire, and values with what he believes to be in the best interest of the common good and the desires, needs, and values of other citizens. This balancing will ideally take place both internally for each citizen and externally in the public realm, fuelling dialogue, cooperation, and compromise. It is clear both that this type of political engagement is currently rare in America and that in order to contribute to the increase of such engagement citizens will have to develop civic virtues, such as the ones discussed throughout the dissertation, in a balanced and robust way. It is for this goal of healthy democratic citizenship – as defined by Dewey – that I suggest American civic education should strive, and to which environmental aesthetics of schools can contribute.

decrease has been contributed to by a diminution of natural landscapes (especially on school grounds) and less accessibility to such landscapes within walking distance of many children's homes (Herrigton & Studtmann, 1998). The decreased time spent in nature by children is also contributed to by a growing sense of fear for children's safety, often times leading to little unsupervised and unstructured play. This decrease has been so extensive that Richard Louv goes so far as to suggest that a growing number of children are suffering from, what he calls, Nature Deficit Disorder, or a severe lack of access to and time spent within nature (Louv, 2011).

The environments of many American schools contribute to this deficit. For example, using aerial photographs, Alexis Schulman and Catherine A. Peters (2008) classified and compared land cover on 258 U.S. public elementary and middle schools in Baltimore, Boston, and Detroit.

Schulman and Peters found that, on average, schoolyards covered more than 68% of the school property and that they were dominated by turf grass and impervious surface, with very little tree cover (on average, less than 10%)...[The researchers] contend that the amount of tree cover found in most schoolyards is inadequate given health and environmental quality research findings to date⁸⁹. (Munoz, 2009, p. 19)

⁸⁹ "In recognition of the environmental quality benefits of the urban forest, a number of cities and urban forestry organizations have begun to establish goals for percent tree canopy cover in urban areas. For example, in a study sponsored by the USDA Forest Service, American Forests, the national conservation organization, established tree canopy goals for U.S. cities (American Forests, 1999). For cities east of the Mississippi, these goals are: 40% cover overall, 50% for suburban residential, and 25% for urban residential" (Schulman & Peters 2008 p. 3). 10% tree coverage on school grounds is inadequate by all standards.



Photograph 138: Many school grounds are covered with turf grass or impervious surfaces such as asphalt, lacking tree-cover and other vegetation.

When less than 10% of school grounds have tree coverage, and the majority of the grounds are covered in turf grass or impervious surfaces – as in the image of above – schools are a major contributor to children’s lack of exposure to natural environments. Since, “[c]hildren spend a great deal of their childhood in school grounds and for many it is the most significant experience of an outdoor environment (Titman, 1994)” (Malone & Tranter, 2003), if school grounds provide access to little more than concrete and barren playing fields, children will have minimal overall exposure to nature.

The problem with these de-natured⁹⁰ play grounds can be seen in numerous studies that show the devastating effects of nature deficit.

⁹⁰ This term is not meant to imply that these playgrounds once incorporated nature better than they do today; rather, the playgrounds are de-natured in comparison to what they were before being developed, i.e. when they were natural, undeveloped land.

Humans living in landscapes that lack trees or other natural features undergo patterns of social, psychological, and physical breakdown that are strikingly similar to those observed in animals that have been deprived of their natural habitat. ‘In animals, what you see is increased aggression, disrupted parenting patterns, and disrupted social hierarchies,’ says Frances Kuo, a professor at the University of Illinois, who, with her colleagues, has studied the negative impact of de-natured life on human health and well-being. Among them, they have noted *decreased civility, more aggression, more property crime, more loitering, more graffiti, and more litter*, as well as less supervision of children outdoors. ‘We might call some of that ‘soiling the nest,’ which is not healthy,’ she says. ‘No organisms do that when they’re in good shape. ... In our studies, people with less access to nature show relatively *poor attention or cognitive function, poor management of major life issues, [and] poor impulse control*. (Louv, 2011, P. 63-64)

These results have been gathered from a number of research studies, most of which look at the behaviors of residents in public housing facilities. According to Kuo, “these facilities provide an ideal laboratory for studying the ‘green effect’ because their occupants are randomly assigned to standard housing units, some of which have grass and trees nearby.⁹¹” This random assignment assures that there is no prior “systematic relationship between the vegetation outside an apartment building and the characteristics of its residents” (Kuo & Sullivan, 2001, pp.351-2). For example, it cannot be the case that more engaged residents plant vegetation or lobby for its provision.

In a 2001 study, Kuo and Sullivan collected police data on property, violent, and total crimes, for 98 apartment buildings and used the amount of tree and grass coverage outside each building to predict crime. One benefit of the study was a “similarity among residents coupled with the consistent low-rise architecture” of the apartments used in the study. “The residents [were] strikingly homogenous with respect to many of the

⁹¹ <http://news.illinois.edu/news/09/0213nature.html>.

individual characteristics that have been shown to increase vulnerability to crime – income, education, and life circumstances” (Kuo & Sullivan, 2001, p. 351). Using crime report summaries for each address in the study area, and assessing vegetation using both aerial and ground-level photographs, Kuo and Sullivan (2001) found that vegetation was significantly and negatively related to each measure of crime:

Compared to buildings with low levels of vegetation, those with medium levels had 42% fewer total crimes, 40% fewer property crimes, and 44% fewer violent crimes. The comparison between low and high levels of vegetation was even more striking: Buildings with high levels of vegetation had 52% fewer total crimes, 48% fewer property crimes, and 56% fewer violent crimes than buildings with low levels of vegetation. (p. 354)

While impressive, these results did not control for other possible confounding contributors to crime, such as the number of units in each apartment complex, the number of units occupied during the study, the number of vacancies, and building heights. Controlling for these factors, however, Kuo and Sullivan (2001) still found that “vegetation predicts crime and that this relationship cannot be accounted for by these other confounding variables” (p. 358). In fact, they also found that predictions of crime were improved when vegetation was added as predictive factor, and that the best model for predicting crime used only the number of units in the apartment complex and vegetation as predictive factors.

While they did not test these suggested causal mechanisms, based on previous research and empirical support, Kuo and Sullivan (2001) suggest that this decrease in crime could be correlated with increased vegetation because increased vegetation leads to increased surveillance by encouraging more people to spend more time outside (p. 46).

They also suggest that vegetation may act as a territorial marker, indicating implied surveillance, even when no visible surveillance is present. (In this case vegetation would work in much the same way as an empty police car in deterring crime.) Vegetation often indicates increased care, which sends the deterring message that vandalism and crime will be noticed and punished. Kuo and Sullivan also suggest a second potential causal mechanism, suggesting that vegetation might decrease violence by mitigating mental fatigue, which has been shown to be a psychological precursor to violence by causing irritability, inattention, and decreased impulse control – all of which have been linked to aggression and violence⁹².

These studies and causal conjectures are helpful for improving civic education in American schools because the behaviors these studies identify, as resulting from a lack of natural features within an environment, are the types of behaviors many relatively barren school grounds are likely to encourage. The picture below shows just such a school playground: barren, covered in concrete, and separated from the surrounding environment.

⁹² See Kuo and Sullivan, 2001, p. 347 for a brief research review on the topic.



Photograph 139: Many playgrounds lack all natural materials, vegetation, and connection to surrounding environments.

If instead schools provided safe, ecologically rich, natural environments, such as the one shown in the photograph below, for children to explore, experience, and maintain, our schools could begin to provide a rich resource for the development of essential democratic civic virtues.



Photograph 140: Example of a natural playground that incorporates many types of plants, flowers, and trees, as well as integrating play equipment with the natural environment created by rocks, water, and vegetation.

For example, studies, such as the one discussed next, give reason to believe that schools with grounds like these – that incorporate grass, trees, flowers, rocks, and play equipment made of natural materials – can contribute to increased civility, attention, and impulse-control.

Since schools require a large amount of directed attention, to material being taught and tasks being accomplished, mental fatigue – or a lessened ability to focus one’s attention – is likely to immerge in students after a period of concentrated study because mental fatigue increases the longer direct attention is required. Importantly for considering the environmental aesthetics of schools, in numerous studies mental fatigue

has been linked to aggression, in the following ways: 1) The more fatigued we become the less likely we are to reason, reflect, and process information in a calm way, and the more likely we are to become inattentive. Both consequences increase the chance that we grow angry and cause conflict. 2) Mental fatigue is also likely to cause irritability, which has been linked to aggression in numerous studies. 3) Mental fatigue also leads to difficulty in controlling impulses which can easily lead to aggressive displays of behavior. Hence, when students become mentally fatigued it is reasonable to expect an increase in aggression and violence. However, nature – and its encouragement of relaxed attention – has been shown to alleviate mental fatigue, resulting in decreased aggression and potentially leading to increased civility, attention, and impulse control⁹³. Testing this multi-step relationship, in a 2001 study, Kuo and Sullivan demonstrate that nearby nature can in fact mitigate aggression through its effects on mental fatigue.

This study involved interviewing African American women in a Chicago housing project who lived in similar apartments with varying access to vegetation. Their attentional functioning or mental fatigue was measured by administering a Digit Span Backwards test requiring participants to repeat backwards a series of numbers just heard. To measure participants' aggression the Conflict Tactics Scale, a widely used self-report measure to assess levels of family aggression and violence, was used. Mood, stress, and social integration were also measured to rule out their confounding effects on causing aggression. The resulting analysis of this data showed that aggression and

⁹³ See Kuo and Sullivan, 2001b for a more detailed account of this multi-step relationship as well as for supporting research.

violence rates were significantly lower for residents who lived in green conditions than in those whose surroundings were barren. Analysis also showed that mental fatigue, as tested by the Digit Span Backward Test, was systematically related to aggression and residents living in greener conditions had less mental fatigue. Putting these results together and statistically ruling out other causal mechanisms, Kuo and Sullivan (2001b) were able to conclude that increased exposure to nature can decrease aggression and violence by mitigating mental fatigue.

With the devastating rise of school shootings in the last decade, and a prevalence of lesser violent acts on school campuses, such studies denote important changes that should be made to our school grounds, not only for the immediate improvement of the health and safety of our children, but also for the long-term health of our democracy. Studies such as this indicate that many school environments lacking adequate exposure to nature actively increase aggression and violence, whereas schools that expose children routinely to nature can mitigate their mental fatigue, improve civility, increase attention, and enhance students' impulse control. If school environments cause social, psychological, and physical problems similar to those observed in animals that have been denied their natural habitats, as suggested in the research just discussed, then these environments will also fail to achieve successful civic education because such environments are highly unlikely to develop civic virtues such as caring for others, respect, and persistence. If our schools' environments actively prevent the development

of civic virtue then successful civic education cannot be achieved, regardless of how adequately civic knowledge and skills are presented.

Another way nature may benefit students and contribute to the development of democratic civic virtues is through nature's ability to reduce stress in children. A 2003 study on the ability of nature to buffer rural children from stressful life events found that "even a view of nature – green plants and vistas – helps reduce stress among highly stressed children. Further, the more plants, green views and access to natural play areas, the more positive the results" (Wells & Evans, 2003). Since stress has been linked to unsocial and antidemocratic behavior, as discussed in Chapter 4, the reduction of stress by nature is a significant consequence that can also contribute to the improvement of civic education and the development of civic virtues such as those seen when students were immersed in nature during a week-long residential outdoor education program for at-risk 6th graders:

So-called-at-risk students who have not had much experience in nature show a marked improvement of 27 percent in test scores, related to mastery of science, when they learn in weeklong residential outdoor education programs. They also showed enhanced *cooperation and conflict-resolution skills*; gains in *self-esteem*; gains in *positive environmental behavior*; and improvements in *problem solving*, *motivation to learn*, and *classroom behavior*. (American Institute for Research, 2005, emphasis added)

With such a great potential for the improvement of civic education through the development of civic virtues such as those found in this study, the integration of nature in schools is an important resource for improving school aesthetics. In what follows, I discuss further research that shows the ability of integrating nature into school

environments to positively affect the development of specific civic virtues, such as the development of motivation, personal responsibility, self-discipline, civic-mindedness, respect, tolerance, autonomy, empathy, generosity, community building, and awareness. Mirroring discussions in previous chapters, this development is partially accomplished by creating environments that reduce anti-democratic dispositions such as behavior problems, bullying, and school violence.

NATURE'S BENEFICIAL EFFECTS ON DEMOCRATIC CIVIC VIRTUES

Reduction in Behavior Problems, Bullying, and School Violence

Despite a general growing trend in school violence, bullying, and aggressive school behavior, among other less significant school behavior problems, greening school grounds has been shown to reverse these problems, creating calmer, more peaceful, inclusive playground environments as well as better behavior from students during classroom time. A 2005 study, by Janet E. Dymont, on the impacts of green school ground initiatives at 45 elementary, middle, and high schools in the Toronto District School Board, shows that “Just under half of the study participants (44%) reported that student discipline problems had decreased on the green school ground and an almost identical percentage (45%) reported that incidents of aggressive behavior had decreased” (p. 27). This decrease in aggression and discipline problems is especially significant when compared to the increase in aggressive behavior and bullying described in a

growing body of literature (Borg, 1999; Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; Evans, 1998, 2001). Reducing behavior problems, bullying, and violence allows schools to provide environments where students can develop social, democratic behaviors and skills instead of being continually bombarded by anti-social and anti-democratic influences.

These beneficial consequences make sense, because if students are in environments, both within school buildings and on school grounds, that nurture them by reducing stress, filling them with a sense of belonging and ease, and inspiring them with a myriad of beautiful details, their behavior is likely to reflect this inspiration, ease, and comfort, resulting in less behavioral problems, such as class-room disruptions, fighting, and disrespect (Evans, 2001; Moore, 1986; Rivkin, 1995; Titman, 1994). School grounds and school buildings filled with nature – as in the image below, containing burgeoning plants, native vegetation, flowers, and beautiful walkways – provide environments where students can have integrity as living, respected human beings.



Photograph 141: Schools that provide regular exposure to beautiful landscapes with a variety of vegetation and the use of natural materials create environments to which students can feel connected and in which they can feel enlivened and engaged.

When school environments stop implicitly treating students like caged animals or prisoners, and provide students access to natural landscapes that can ease stress, promote care, encourage community, and relax the mind, they can contribute to improved behavior, dispositions, and successful civic education.

Motivation, Personal Responsibility, and Self-Discipline

Although all the reasons are not understood, exposing children to nature – even just to views of nature – is correlated with an increase in their motivation, personal

responsibility, self-discipline, and other individual traits tied to their cognitive and psychological development. For example,

A study that investigated 101 public high schools in Michigan found that students in schools with larger windows and more views of nearby nature – from classrooms, lunchrooms, and outdoor eating areas – had both higher standardized test scores and higher graduation rates, and a greater percentage of those students planned to attend college. (Matsuoka, 2008)

When given access to nature, even if this access is only through enhanced views of nature in the distance, students were found to have greater motivation and a greater sense of personal responsibility, contributing to improved academic performance and graduation rates, as well as to more ambitions and optimistic goals for the future. R.H. Matsuoka (2008), controlling for a number of socio-demographic and general school characteristics in his analysis, such as students socio-economic status, racial/ethnic makeup, building age, and size of enrollment, also found that while “landscape and access characteristics were significantly associated with student academic achievement and behavior.... trees and shrubs needed to be relatively close to the students to provide [these] academic achievement and behavior benefits.” Hence, the more direct access to and interaction with nature students have, the greater the development of these essential democratic civic virtues – as shown in the rendition of Peach Tree Charter High School, in Atlanta, where students not only have direct views of natural landscapes from inside the school but also have easy and direct accesses to these natural environments on school grounds:



Photograph 142: The more contact students have with nature at school and the more views of nature provided in classrooms, the greater the academic and behavioral benefits.

Additionally, it has been shown that access to nature correlates with an increase in self-control and self-discipline. A study by Taylor et al. (2001), found “positive benefits to inner city youth, particularly girls, from access to green spaces for play. Even a view of green settings enhances peace, self-control, and self-discipline. While the results are most notable for girls, the evidence is not limited to the positive impact on girls.” By measuring concentration, inhibition of initial impulses, and the ability to delay gratification Taylor et al. found that, for girls, all three measures, as well as their combined scores, were beneficially affected by an increase in nature around their homes. However, the researchers caution that a causal claim remains to be substantiated. The research in this section indicates that time spent in natural environments, as well as access to views of nature, correspond to increased motivation, self-direction, responsibility, and drive for future achievements. Even though a causal connection has not been proven and all current suggestions for causal mechanisms are speculative, the

correlation between nature and beneficial civic virtues provides adequate evidence for thinking the implementation of nature in schools can contribute to the improvement of civic education.

Civic Mindedness, Respect, and Tolerance

In addition to strengthening individual dispositions and the civic virtues that depend upon them – such as self-direction, responsibility, and motivation, as discussed in the previous section – incorporating nature into school environments also has been shown to correlate with the development of civic virtues that depend upon communal dispositions, such as civic mindedness, respect, and tolerance. Studying the influence and effects of “greening” 45 school grounds, out of 558 schools, in the Toronto District School Board, J. Dymont (2005) reports that the impact of green school grounds is significant, contributing to more civil behavior, better communication, enhanced interactions among students and teachers, fewer discipline problems, and less aggression (p. 28).

[Principals and teachers at Toronto schools with increased greenery] reported that when students were learning and playing on a green school ground, they were being more civil (72%), communicating more effectively (63%) and were being more cooperative (69%). These improvements were noted not only among students; interaction between students and teachers were also enhanced (69%). These encouraging findings are not surprising given that a notable number of environment-behaviour researchers have likewise documented the positive influence of exposure to green spaces on social behaviour (Alexander et al., 1995; Cheskey, 2001; Faber-Taylor et al., 1998; Huttenmoser, 1995). (Dymont, 2005, p. 26)

Further, Dymont reports that these beneficial consequences of green school grounds extend beyond leisure time spent in the natural environments, and include enhancement of social behaviors during academic and group work done outside as well:

Participants provided numerous examples of how the green school ground encouraged students to be more well-mannered, tolerant and polite with each other during recess and lunch hour...Generally, the positive influence of green school grounds on social interactions extended beyond recess and lunch time. Many principals and teachers commented that students were more cooperative and communicative when they were having formal classes on the school ground as well. They indicated that students were able to work in small groups more effectively and that they had more patience for their tasks. They also noted that students who normally found it difficult to interact with other students were able to work better with others when learning outdoors. (Dymont, 2005, p. 26)

This research suggests that classrooms that have nature incorporated in them – such as ample views from large windows, fountains, and potted plants – can also provide similar benefits and improvements in patience, cooperation, and communication.

Dymont (2005) also shows that green school grounds are more inclusive, increasing a broader range of engagement and participation, and positively effecting student tolerance:

This inclusiveness manifested itself in many different ways, with approximately half of all study participants reporting that green school grounds are more inclusive with respect to gender (54%), class (47%), race (46%) and ability (52%)...The fact that green school grounds were more inclusive of people who may feel isolated on the basis of gender, class, race or ability suggests that these spaces promote, in a very broad sense, social inclusion. (p. 30-3)

Beyond increasing tolerance for, and inclusion of, previously excluded groups, green school grounds had the additional benefit of promoting greater connection with a school's surrounding community. School grounds that had previously sat empty after hours, were

now always in use by the broader community, again increasing engagement and inclusiveness (Dyment, 2005). These studies show that increasing nature on school grounds has the ability to enhance civic mindedness and respect, as well as increasing tolerance and inclusions, all of which are important communal democratic civic virtues.

The strength of Dyment's findings is increased by the fact that results were robust and consistent across the schools studied and the questionnaires gathered from participants:

Particularly striking is the fact that the results varied little across the board, despite the differences among the schools, projects and research participants involved. The 149 questionnaire respondents and 21 interviewees associated with 45 different greening projects consistently reported positive impacts. Irrespective of the respondent's characteristics (gender, age), the school's characteristics (grade level, socio-economic status of the school catchment area), or the project's characteristics (history, amount of funding), positive impacts were evident across the majority of areas investigated. Given this overall similarity in responses, this report provides minimal commentary on the statistical tests conducted to explore how school, project and demographic differences influenced results. (Dyment, 2005, p. 12)

By looking at the results of actual green-school initiatives this study provides helpful evidence that a similar greening of school grounds at other schools can expect similarly positive results, contributing to improved civic education.

Autonomy, Empathy, Generosity, and Community Building

Integrating nature into schools also has the ability to increase community-building civic virtues, such as empathy.

[R]esearchers at the University of Rochester, in New York, report that exposure to the natural environment leads people to nurture close relationships with fellow

human beings, to value community, and to be more generous with money. ‘Previous studies have shown the health benefits of nature range from more rapid healing to stress reduction to improved mental performance and vitality,’ one of the researchers, Richard M. Ryan, noted. ‘Now we’ve found nature brings out more social feelings, more value for community and close friendships. People are more caring when they’re around nature. (Mapes, 2009)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this research suggests that human caring is inspired by the living natural world more easily than by lifeless, man-made materials. Referenced in the preceding quote, Weinstein, Przybylski, and Ryan (2009) conducted a series of four studies that found: “natural environments, unlike human-made environments, can increase valuing of intrinsic aspirations and decrease valuing of extrinsic aspirations because natural environments create experiences fostering autonomy and nature relatedness” (p. 1316). In this context, “intrinsic aspirations concern the pursuit of goals that in themselves satisfy basic psychological needs (e.g., personal growth, intimacy, community). Extrinsic aspirations focus on externally valued goods that are not inherently rewarding but are sought to derive positive regard or rewards from others (e.g., money, image, fame)” (Weinstein, et al., 2009, p. 1316).

By completing four studies, Weinstein et al. were able to conclude:

- 1) Exposure to nature increased intrinsic aspirations and decreased extrinsic aspirations.
- 2) Exposure to man-made environments increased extrinsic aspirations and did not change intrinsic aspirations.

Overall, these results are interesting because they suggest that nature, which is inherently unrelated to human intervention, brings individuals closer to others,

whereas human-made environments orient goals toward more selfish or self-interested ends. (Weinstein, 2009, p. 1327)

- 3) The more completely a subject felt immersed in nature the greater his or her feelings of autonomy and connectedness to nature.
- 4) The more completely a subject felt immersed in a man-made environment the lower his or her feelings of autonomy and connectedness to nature.

The result that immersion in non-nature settings thwarted experiences of relatedness and autonomy is interesting and consistent with speculations that living in modern, non-nature environments may have a powerful isolating and/or self-alienating effect on people (Frantz et al., 2005; Vining et al., 2008). (Weinstein, 2009, p. 1327)

- 5) Nature relatedness and autonomy were independent and robust predictors of higher intrinsic aspirations and lower extrinsic ones.
- 6) When asked to make decisions based on intrinsic versus extrinsic values (such as whether or not to share money) participants more immersed in nature and feeling higher levels of nature relatedness and autonomy were more generous:

Feelings of autonomy and nature relatedness were responsible for the willingness to give to others, indicating that these experiences facilitated a willingness to promote others' interests as well as one's own. In other words, autonomy and relatedness encouraged participants to focus on their intrinsic values for relationships and community rather than on personal gain. (Weinstein, 2009, p. 1327)

When placed together, these results allowed Weinstein et al. to conclude:

In these experiments, people's contact with nature was relatively weak, consisting of brief exposure to slides of natural landscapes or sitting among plants in an office space. Given that these brief exposures appear to have yielded a reliable impact in creating a more pro-social value set, we might speculate about the more general balance of nature and non-nature in people's lives and its societal effects. Our results suggest that to the extent our links with nature are disrupted, we may

also lose some connection with each other. This relation, if sustained, has broad implications for environmental psychology and community design. (Weinstein, 2009, p. 1328)

One such implication, important for improving civic education in schools, through increased pro-social care and community-building dispositions, is the recognition that there is little to inspire social feelings, a value for community, or care on a concrete, dirt, or rubber playground – such as the one shown below.



Photograph 143: Example of playground structures and ground cover commonly found at schools. Such environments covered exclusively with man-made objects do little to inspire autonomy, connection, and care in students.

Even a barren green playing field is likely to do little to increase such civic virtues. But a row of flowering shrubs, a stream flowing through campus, or garden beds planted by the students themselves, as shown in the images below, are likely to inspire autonomy, connection, care, and generosity, all essential democratic civic virtues.



Photographs 144 and 145: School grounds that have rich natural landscapes created with water, rocks, and vegetation can strengthen student prioritization of intrinsic values such as personal growth, intimacy, and community.

It would take further research to provide evidence that consistent and routine exposure to nature has the ability to permanently alter values, strengthening intrinsic ones while weakening extrinsic ones. However, the previous research discussed on habituation, suggests that such long-term effects, such as the permanent development of these civic virtues as guiding principles for one's way of life, are likely.

Other studies also show the important effect trees and vegetation can have on connection and community. For example,

A series of recent studies conducted by Kuo and Sullivan and their colleagues has begun to demonstrate the value of trees and vegetation within inner-city housing projects in Chicago (Kuo, Bacaicoa, & Sullivan, 1998). Sullivan and Kuo (1996) report that public housing residents who live in buildings surrounded by trees feel a greater sense of connectedness to the community and experience fewer incidents

of violence than do residents living in identical buildings with very few trees. (Wells, 2000, p. 781)

The difference in the amount people use green and barren spaces has also been shown to be extreme, as is the difference in the amount of socialization that occurs in these two types of outdoor spaces: “Coley, Kuo, and Sullivan (1997) found that the presence of trees and vegetation in outdoor public spaces was associated with greater use of these spaces by both youth and adult residents. The authors conclude that natural landscaping promotes opportunities for social interaction as well as the supervision of children in poor urban neighborhoods” (Wells, 2000, p. 781).

Another recent study “examined whether nearby nature contributes to the vitality of urban neighborhood spaces. [There were] 758 observations of individuals in 59 relatively barren and green outdoor spaces in an inner-city neighborhood and ...on average 90% more people [were found to use] green than barren spaces. [There were also], on average, 83% more individuals engaged in social activity in green versus barren spaces” (Sullivan et al., 2004, p. 691). The ramifications of these findings, for encouraging and supporting the development of community and positive social interactions at schools, are extreme. If the implementation of nature on school grounds obtained similar results, then we could expect 90% more students, teachers, and parents would congregate on school grounds, and 83% more students, teachers, and parents would engage in positive social interactions when on school grounds – if the grounds were green instead of barren, i.e., contained more trees, bushes, flowers, and other vegetation. Healthy citizens within a democracy require social interactions, an awareness

of the community, and ample involvement. Increasing time spent on school grounds, if it includes engaging with other community members, could greatly contribute to the development of these virtues, and thus to the success of civic education.

The results of these studies indicate that, “by increasing face-to-face contact and the number of individuals involved in social interactions, trees and grass in inner-city common spaces contribute to the social cohesion and vitality of a neighborhood” (Sullivan et al., 2004, p. 696). It seems likely that by greening school campuses a similar improvement in the social cohesion and vitality of school communities is likely to occur, and consequently an increase in opportunities to develop and practice democratic civic virtues. These benefits nature could have at schools – by inspiring social feelings, increasing the evaluation of community and friendships, and enhancing care – virtually speak for themselves. As do its potential benefits for improved civic education.

Educating students for 16+ years in schools that inspire social feelings, increase the evaluation of community and friendships, and enhance care could have a tremendous effect on the health of our democracy. In schools that look more like botanical gardens, forests, river basins, gardens, and nature preserves, than, at best, looking like new office buildings, and at worst, looking like prisons, democratic citizens would have greater opportunities to build rich communities, have meaningful social interactions, and develop civic virtues, all of which have the potential to positively affect their community building, social interactions, and civic engagement, both during their school years and in the future as adult citizens.

The previous four sections discuss research indicating the relationship between exposure to nature and an increase in motivation, personal responsibility, self-discipline, civic-mindedness, respect, tolerance, autonomy, empathy, generosity, community building, and awareness, as well as a reduction in behavior problems, bullying, and school violence. While a direct causal relationship has rarely been proven, and many causal mechanisms are unknown or unverified, this research gives strong evidence for my thesis that the environmental aesthetics of schools can affect the development of civic virtues, and in this way contribute to the improvement of civic education. This research should also provide a strong impetus for implementing natural aesthetics in schools, as well as for carrying out more detailed research, specifically on the results of natural aesthetics added to school environments. In the following section I provide many examples for how student exposure to nature can be increased in schools.

EXAMPLES OF HOW TO INCREASE EXPOSURE TO NATURE IN SCHOOLS

If our playgrounds begin to look more like the following photographs, and exhibit the following characteristics, our schools can become rich resources for the development of our children⁹⁴.

⁹⁴ Many of these suggestions come from a conversation held between Rena Upitis and Annie Ball, an educator and architect who has spent many years designing children's playgrounds. An account of the conversation can be found in *Raising a School* (Upitis, 2010).

- Play grounds should include gardens and other outdoor spaces that provide mini-worlds for children, where they can “explore the diversity of the natural world, using all of their sense and intellectual capabilities” (Upitis, 2010, p. 57). Spaces on school grounds should include a variety of vegetation, building materials, and terrain. As in the image below, they should provide diverse areas for exploration and places from which quite observations can be made:



Photograph 146: Schools should provide diverse areas for exploration and quite observation.

- There should be flora on school grounds that “reflect seasonal changes” (Upitis, 2010, p. 57), such as the flowering trees in the image below:



Photograph 147: Flowering trees can help to expose students to the rhythm of the seasons.

- School “landscapes should be abundant enough for children to be able to pick things” (Upitis, 2010, p. 57):



Photograph 148: Ecologically rich school grounds should provide an abundant resource for children to explore, cultivate, and harvest.

- School landscapes should also “be filled with a cornucopia of textures and colors, with plants that are both inedible and edible” (Upitis, 2010, p. 57):



Photographs 149 and 150: School grounds can be enhanced with a cornucopia of textures and colors created by both edible and inedible plants.

- Schools grounds should contain school gardens, where children have an “opportunity to grow their own food and to engage in meaningful, purposeful work⁹⁵” (Upitis, 2010, p. 57):



Photographs 151 and 152: School gardens provide students with ample opportunities for engagement, participation, and care.

⁹⁵ School gardens will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 12.



Photograph 153: School gardens provide students with ample opportunities for engagement, participation, and care.

- Gardens ought to contain a rich variety of aromas – “to cultivate in a child the necessary wonder and awe and sense of care for the natural world” (Upitis, 2010, p. 57):



Photograph 154: The natural environment can influence all student senses, increasing awareness and connection.

- Each addition to school grounds should consider contribute to creating a unique sense of place. For example, even “one tree can create a sense of place” (Upitis, 2010, p. 57), as in the image below, where an otherwise vast and unbroken landscape becomes more accessible and usable because of one tree:



Photograph 155: Even one tree can help to create a sense of place on school grounds, through which students can develop a sense of belonging and care.

Ball says that “gardens can help teach about relationships – relationships between people, relationships between people and other living things, and relationships between people and the earth – a nested set of relationships” (Upitis, 2010, p. 57). Ball’s views on school playgrounds initiate us into the new way of thinking that I argue for: Time spent outside at school should contribute to the development of children; instead of simply being a break or a brief time away from the important lessons of the day, time spent outside on school playgrounds should provide some of the richest and most meaningful lessons of the day. By designing playgrounds that contain the rich diversity of the natural

world integrated throughout – as in the images below – children can be given adequate opportunity to explore and experience nature and benefit from the development and connection precipitated by it, as discussed in the previous section.



Photographs 156 and 157: Contrary to most contemporary playgrounds, natural playgrounds integrate play equipment with the natural environment, using grass, rocks, and vegetation as part of the intended play areas.

Not only can children benefit from exposure to nature on school grounds, cultivating and maintaining these natural landscapes offers students unprecedented opportunities for participating and engaging in the beautification of their school environments. Raking leaves, planting gardens, cultivating native plants, watering, pruning, gathering flowers for their classrooms, and harvesting fruit in the fall are all examples of ways students can actively participate in the creation and maintenance of natural school environments. In this way, playgrounds that make use of nature also allow children to learn about, enjoy, and work within the changing of the seasons. As in the images below, it allows them to identify with their environment, to feel that they are both supported by and can support their surrounding world, through meaningful, purposeful work, effort, and enjoyment.



Photographs 158 and 159: Ecologically rich school grounds provide wonderful opportunities for student engagement and participation through activities such as leaf-raking and vegetable planting, cultivating, and harvesting.

Through the work, experience, and contributions of students, school playgrounds can each develop a unique sense of place. They can become places children identify with, take pride in, and love. They will no longer be random locations for intermittent entertainment. Instead, re-natured playgrounds can become beautiful natural environments for which the children care and in which they develop and nurture community. As in the images below – where children have access to, are engaged by, and connected with their environments because of the organic design and use of child-friendly materials – our school playgrounds can become places where children feel they belong and begin to develop a passion for engagement, expression, and participation.



Photographs 160 and 161: Using natural materials and combining man-made play equipment with natural landscapes provide children with the richest developmental environments.

These benefits can also be enhanced by increasing exposure to nature within school buildings and classrooms. Methods for achieving increased natural exposure indoors include⁹⁶:

- Large windows that provide natural light, views of natural landscapes, and which open to let in outside air.

⁹⁶ For research on the benefits of these suggestions see: *A Literature Review of the Effects of Natural Light on Building Occupants* (Edwards & Torcellini, 2002); “Human Response to Window Views and Indoor Plants in the workplace” (Chang & Chen, 2005); and <http://www.ieqindoorplants.com.au/indoor-plant-resource-library/benefits-of-indoor-plants/> - effects of indoor plants.



Photograph 162: Large windows in classrooms can provide natural light and views of nature, beneficial to student behavior and academic performance.

- The use of natural materials for furniture and toys: to build things like bookshelves and tables, or simply made available for student experience and experimentation.



Photographs 163-165: Natural materials can be used indoors to help connect students to their surrounding environment.

Bringing in materials from the surrounding environment can help connect the classroom and students to it, and prevent a sense of disconnected isolation.



Photographs 166-168: Natural materials can be used in creative ways indoors to enhance the learning environment and to create a connection between indoor and outdoor learning spaces.

- Water features such as fountains, indoor plants, and cut flowers, boughs, and grasses.



Photograph 169 and 170: Classrooms can be further enhanced by growing plants indoors and using natural seasonal items for decoration.

By integrating natural aesthetics like the ones suggested in this section, school environments can provide students rich ecological environments, both indoors and out, in which to develop important democratic civic virtues.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIONS

In this section, I discuss potential problems with and objections to the suggestion of increasing exposure to nature at schools⁹⁷. The first objection is that playgrounds with uneven terrains, water features, dirt, water, gardens, and edible plants are dangerous and a recipe for lawsuits. Joe L. Frost, Parker Centennial Professor Emeritus at the University of Texas, Austin, and one of America's leading experts on play and playgrounds says that the number of lawsuits effecting schools, the fear surrounding safety issues, and the fact that litigation is closely tied to safety standards have all affected school playgrounds and play time by limiting developmentally and behaviorally integral free-play on appropriate play equipment. As a result of these litigations, starting in the 1970s and 1980s, playgrounds all started to look alike. Unfortunately, according to Frost, “playgrounds built around this equipment had major problems—a lack of open spaces, natural features, found materials, and loose parts, all of which are so essential to children's creative, spontaneous play” (2008 p. 147).

⁹⁷ For an in depth understanding of specific challenges faced by schools in Toronto – in integrating nature into school environments – and the researcher's recommendations for overcoming them, see Dyment, 2005, pp 39-49.

In contrast to the current state of affairs, Frost recommends fixing safety standards by making the following changes:

- Leave protecting children from low-level hazards to parents and trained professionals, except when such life-threatening issues as toxic contamination—which require scientific tests to identify—are in question.
- Revise standards and regulations to focus on hazards that have been demonstrated by research and scientific data to result in serious, disabling injuries and fatalities.
- Limit standards to manufactured products and make state and national standards mutually consistent.
- Broaden participation in standards committees to include a range of professionals and require practical experience on playgrounds for safety inspector certification.

It would also be exceedingly helpful if, at the same time we were addressing the standards, we improved training for play leaders. (Frost, 2008, pp. 148-9)

Frost comments that,

We can't go home again to the times when virtually every child worked and played in the natural playgrounds of creeks and hills, mudholes, junk-yards, overgrown lots, and fields and barnyards, but we can show the world how to bring little pieces of such rich, nurturing places to our schoolyards, neighborhoods, and cities. If historical and research evidence for children's play, playgrounds, and recess were taken seriously by adults, threats to their existence would soon be over. History and a century of scholarly research say that play is essential for healthy development. We must save playgrounds, free outdoor play, and recess, because they matter—for children's health, for their development, and for their future. (Frost, 2008, p. 156)

Supporting Frosts' views that our concern should be with creating playgrounds that facilitate important child development and not with over-controlling safety regulations, Wyver, et.al (2010) argue that,

[A]n excessive concern with certain types of safety is leading to the reduction of children's freedom to play, and that this has long-term consequences for children's well-being...Other long term risks for children are emerging as legitimate concerns when surplus safety takes hold. Children miss out on important developmental experiences without access to play opportunities (physical development as well as social, intellectual and emotional development. (pp. 263-4)

In discussing the problems with surplus safety, Wyver et al. give 10 ways that children's play can be restricted. They argue that these restrictions are neither necessary nor beneficial to the development of children and the creation of suitable school playgrounds:

1. Assuming that adults are the best people to manage children's risk-taking.
2. Assuming there are good and bad playground surfaces.
3. Prioritizing regulation over pedagogy in early childhood centers.
4. Assuming restrictions on play freedom are necessary in a modern Western Environment.
5. Assuming children are injury prone.
6. Assuming long periods of walking will be too stressful for toddlers.
7. Being convinced that all hazards on the playground must be avoided.
8. Assuming parental guilt has good outcomes for children.
9. Designing neighborhoods without considering children's right to play.

10. Assuming that you can help children get ahead by stimulating them with extra activities.

As Frost's and Wyer et al.'s arguments indicate, objections based on safety concerns that the improvement of school playgrounds by integrating nature are largely unsupported by research. Rather, research on child development suggests the extreme importance of free play on playgrounds with designs similar to those suggested in this chapter.

A second objection to the suggestions I make in this chapter might be that the time necessary for changing school playgrounds and the time for children to play on these playgrounds are better spent by students in academic studies or other pursuits. As discussed in the previous objection, free, outdoor play has been proven to have “numerous documented and potential benefits” such as the development of sense of self, independence, capacities for creativity, problem-solving, and emotional and intellectual maturity (Lester & Maudsley, 2006; Kellert, 2005). Hence, arguing that students would be better off spending more time preparing for high-stake testing, for example, is not supported by research. Especially if schools strive to develop democratic civic virtues and improve civic education, time spent improving playgrounds and using these playgrounds for creative free play are essential aspects for achieving this development.

Another objection to the suggestions I make for improving school playgrounds is that there are other factors that influence the benefit of play-spaces more than integrating nature into their design. In their work, Malone and Tranter found that,

Research has revealed the way in which children can learn especially through play is strongly influenced by the nature, the design and the policies informing the use

of schoolgrounds (Moore 1989; Titman 1994; Moore and Wong 1997). Their size, the features they contain, and how they are utilized, managed and perceived by staff and students, can all influence the life and work of the school and the quality of education. (Malone & Tranter, 2003)

As a result of this research Malone and Tranter suggest that “the schoolground design, although instrumental in the potential for extending curricula, is less vital than having a view of learning that connects the indoor and outdoor environments” (Malone & Tranter, 2003). This conclusion suggests that in addition to playground design, teacher and staff perspectives on how school grounds can and should be used have an even greater influence, than playground design, on the benefits of playgrounds for the development of democratic civic virtues. This perspective further enforces an argument I make throughout the dissertation, namely, that the most significant change, for the improvement of civic education, lies in seeing that students should be engaged with their school environments. In contrast to thinking that these improvements can only be made with significant financial support and contributions, this research indicates that merely changing the perspective of teachers and staff has the greatest ability to create beneficial change.

EXAMPLES OF ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT INCREASED EXPOSURE TO NATURE

A good example of an organization that is advocating similar changes to school grounds as the ones I make in this chapter is the International School Grounds Alliance

(ISGA).⁹⁸ ISGA “is a global network of organizations working to enrich children’s learning and play through improving the way school grounds are designed and used.” Similar to the suggestions I make in this section, the ISGA believes that school grounds should:

- Provide powerful opportunities for hands-on learning.
- Nurture students' physical, social, and emotional development and wellbeing.
- Reflect and embrace their local ecological, social, and cultural context.
- Embrace risk-taking as an essential component of learning and child development.
- Be open public spaces, accessible to their communities.

The ISGA facilitates these outcomes by:

- Focusing on the way school grounds are used, designed, and managed.
- Facilitating a dialogue about innovative research, design, education, and policy.
- Fostering partnerships between professionals and organizations across the globe.
- Organizing international conferences, gatherings and other programs.
- Advocating for student and school community participation in the design, construction and stewardship of school grounds.
- Promoting the value of enriched school grounds as uniquely positioned, engaging environments for children.

⁹⁸ http://www.greenschoolyards.org/home/about_the_international_school_grounds_alliance.

These lists of goals and methods are a valuable resource for school communities looking to enhance their playgrounds.

The Boston School Yard Initiative provides another example of how suggestions similar to the ones I provide in this chapter have been successfully implemented throughout Boston public schools.

Between 1995 and 2013, the Boston Schoolyard Initiative (BSI) transformed Boston's schoolyards from barren asphalt lots into dynamic centers for recreation, learning and community life. School-by-school, neighborhood-by-neighborhood, BSI reached children, families, community members and teachers with vibrant outdoor spaces for increased physical activity and creative new approaches to using the schoolyard for teaching and learning. We accomplished our work through a public-private partnership between the City of Boston, Boston Public Schools and the Boston Schoolyard Funders Collaborative⁹⁹.

The impact of this program has been profound:

- 88 schoolyards revitalized
- 30,000 school children reached
- 130 acres of asphalt reclaimed

Additionally, “principals report that BSI schoolyards lead to increased physical activity (100%); improved student behavior (63.2%) and improved relationships with parents and community (73.7%).¹⁰⁰”

While both the BSI and the ISGA improve school grounds in ways similar to those I suggest in this chapter, and although they recognize many beneficial community-building and student-development outcomes, neither of these programs explicitly address

⁹⁹ <http://www.schoolyards.org/about.over.html>.

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.schoolyards.org/about.over.html>.

how their efforts contribute specifically to the development of democratic civic virtues and the improvement of civic education. Both efforts to improve school grounds as well as those being made to increase and improve civic education would benefit greatly, however, from the recognition, by groups like ISGA and BSI, that re-imagining school grounds and playgrounds can be an affordable and especially impactful way to contribute to the development of democratic virtues within our schools.¹⁰¹

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I discuss research indicating the relationship between exposure to nature and an increase in motivation, personal responsibility, self-discipline, civic-mindedness, respect, tolerance, autonomy, empathy, generosity, community building, and awareness, as well as a reduction in behavior problems, bullying, and school violence. As in Chapters 7, 8, and 9, when discussing the ways visual aesthetics of school environments and aesthetics that beneficially effect student hearing, touch, taste, smell, and sense of rhythm, can contribute to the improvement of civic education, increasing nature in schools can also contribute to the improvement of civic education in American schools by meeting the seven characteristics identified as important for successful civic education programs:

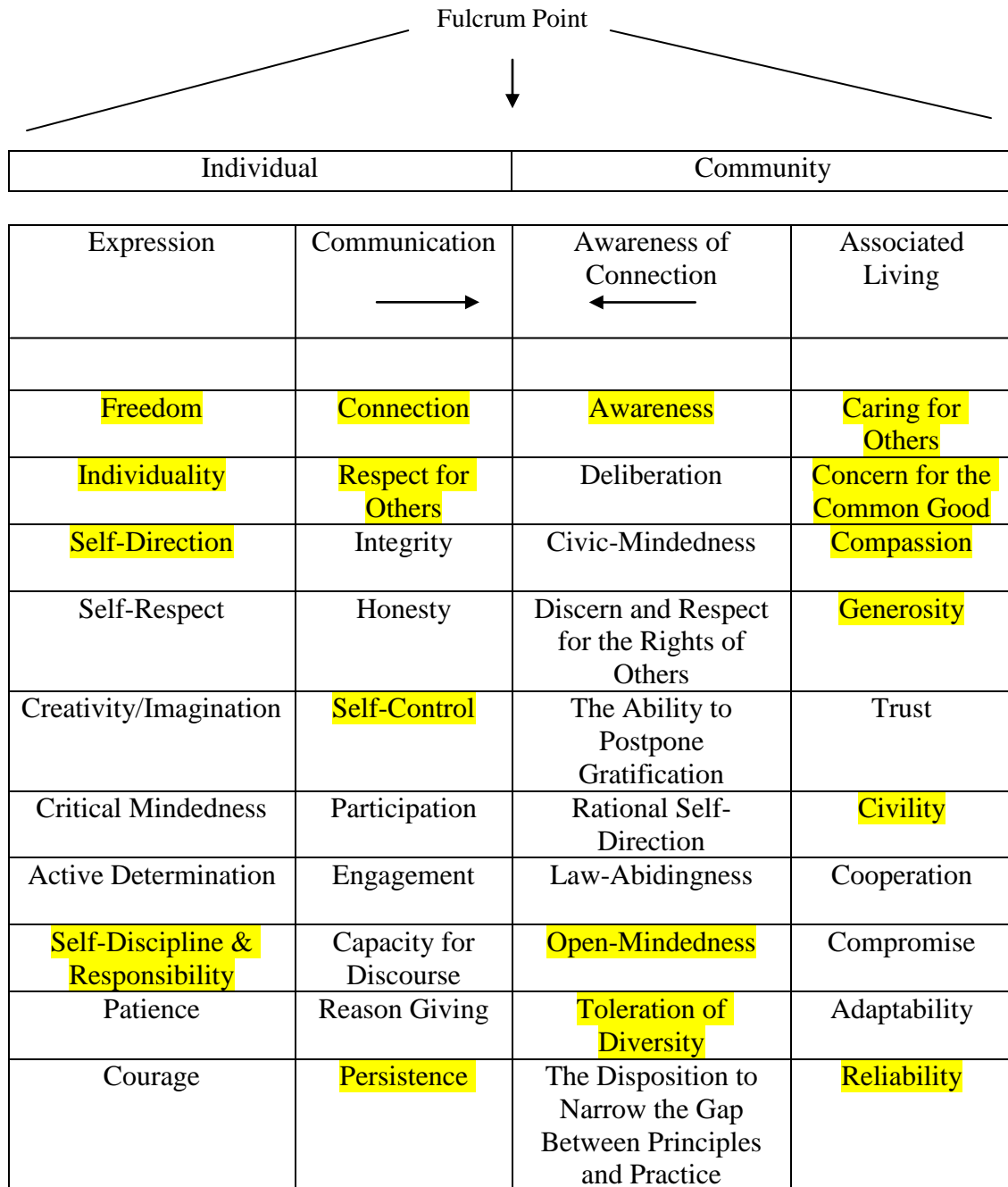
¹⁰¹ For further examples of organizations advocating increased exposure to nature, see these organizations: Life's Better Outside and Leave No Child Inside.

1) Specifying that nature should be increased in schools for the benefit of civic education provides a general goal and method for improving civic education, while also allowing flexibility in the application of how such a natural aesthetic is applied. This flexibility allows each school's specific needs, values, and inspirations to determine the details of the program and additionally to allow implementations to change over time, in order to address emergent problems and needs.

2) Some of the example for how to increase nature in schools, provided in this chapter, will not be directly applicable to all schools; however, in these cases they can function as ideals that lead to increased natural aesthetics and motivation for continued improvement. Hence, even suggestions that seem too idealistic to be practical can help provide guidance for the implementation of realistic measures.

3) The research in this chapter has shown that exposure to nature is correlated to many civic virtues, the development of which can contribute to students embodying a democratic way of life. The civic virtues discussed in this chapter and correlated to student exposure to nature are highlighted in Chart 10 below:

Chart 10: Democratic Civic Virtues Developed by Nature



4) and 5) Increasing nature in schools provides endless and engaging opportunities for cooperative community projects in which students can participate. Planting gardens, cultivating natural landscapes, and transforming traditional playgrounds into ones that are imbedded in nature, are all projects that can encourage students to evaluate different options, work together, and find mutually satisfying solutions to problems as they emerge.

6) By integrating nature into school grounds, playgrounds, buildings, and classrooms, students can be routinely exposed to beneficial environments, filled with abundant natural experiences. This routine exposure will provide the opportunity for civic virtues to develop and grow into habituated ways of being.

7) As Chart 10 indicates, exposure to nature develops student dispositions in a balanced way. Not only are individual dispositions and their supporting civic virtues strengthened, but communal dispositions and their supporting civic virtues are also encouraged, developed, and practiced, resulting in a balanced development and encouraging a creative dynamic in each student.

In these seven ways, making school environments ecologically rich, natural environments can contribute to the improvement of American civic education.

All humans, but especially children, are acutely sensitive to their environments. The number of details a young child can notice walking through the woods is astonishing. He is open to and actively absorbing everything that surrounds him. He will try to imitate

the hop of a rabbit, he will mimic the sound of the wind through the trees, he will smell the flowers and collect the fallen leaves. If children are placed on inhospitable fields with limited and poorly-maintained play equipment, caged-in and separated from the rest of the world by rusty chain-link fences, and left to scurry from one uninviting, dirty, harsh environment to another, they will absorb and reflect what they are surrounded by: ugliness; harshness; a lack of productivity and care; and unnatural, inhuman, bleakness. A democracy needs citizens who are aware of each other and their environments, who are concerned with the needs of others, and who have a wealth of creativity and inspiration with which to contribute to the development and maintenance of their community. These democratic civic virtues are unlikely to be fostered on ugly, barren, de-natured school-grounds. But they can be supported, developed, and practiced on school-grounds to which students contribute their energy and care in order to create beautiful, green, lush, productive, and nurturing environments and communities.

By renewing our citizens' awareness of the nested sets of relationships between people, all living creatures, and the natural environment – through a natural, connected, and conscious design of school buildings and grounds – our schools can become vibrant seedbeds of democratic civic virtues. If school grounds strive to highlight their connection with the surrounding community, contain gardens and playgrounds filled with a diversity of sensual experiences, and attempt – first and foremost – to cultivate a wonder, awe, and sense of care within those who experience them, then, schools can become places that engender democratic civic virtue through care, participation, and

awareness. Among thriving vegetation and poetically crafted architecture, which help to establish and express a unique sense of place within each school, children, who are developing their own vibrant, conscientious, and participatory sense of place in the world, can flourish and our civic education programs can succeed.

Conclusion

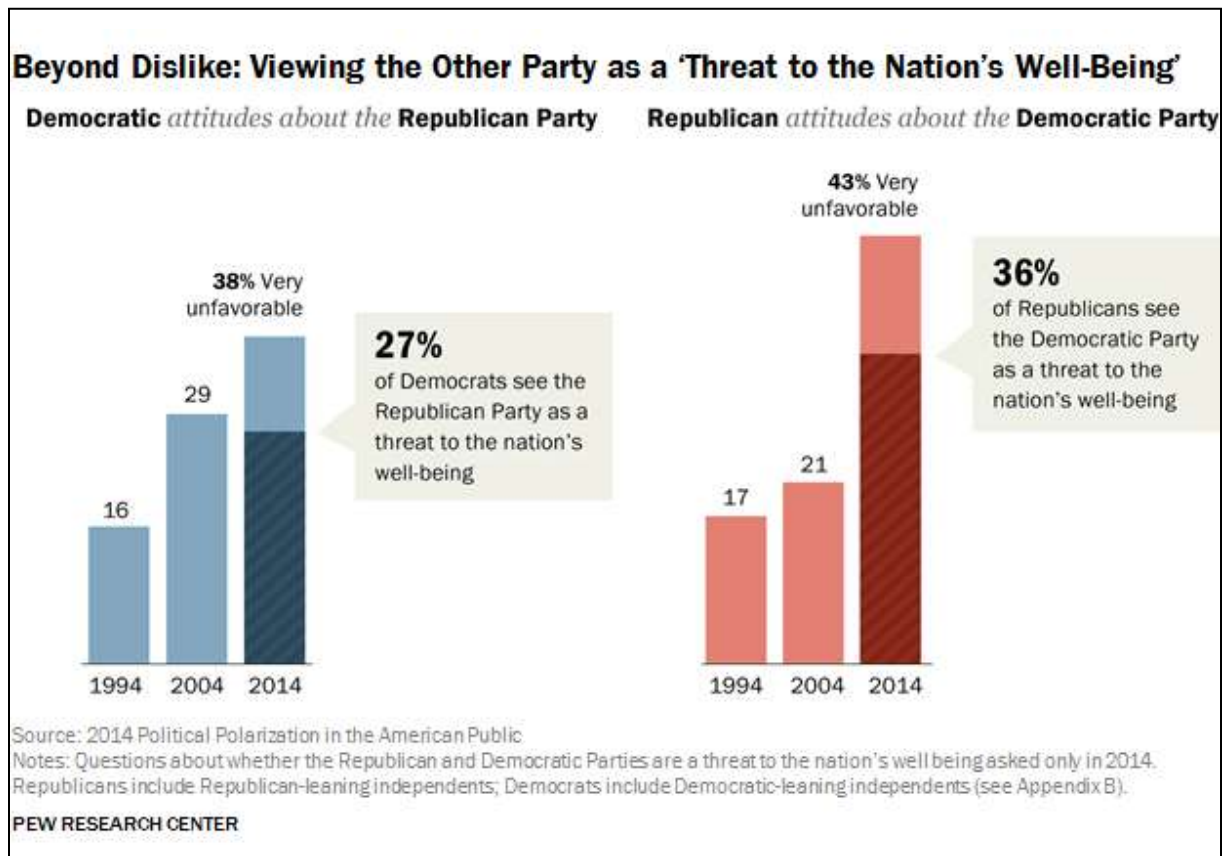
By many accounts American democracy is far from idealistic. In America there is currently a lack of civic engagement, social and economic inequality, declining social capital, partisan conflict, and congressional stagnation, to name but a few of the political problems. And many of these problems seem to be increasing. For example, a recent Pew Research study, *Political Polarization in the American Public: How Increasing Ideological Uniformity and Partisan Antipathy Affect Politics, Compromise and Everyday Life*, demonstrates that not only is partisan conflict creating political deadlock within congress, but this conflict is deeply representative of the American people themselves.

The study of 10,000 adults nationwide – nearly 10 times the size of average political polls – found that, “Republicans and Democrats are more divided along ideological lines – and partisan antipathy is deeper and more extensive – than at any point in the last two decades¹⁰².” This study found that the median Democrat and median Republican views are now further from one another than at any other point in recent history. But more concerning than this divide is the views held by Democrats and Republicans about citizens with alternative views, represented in the chart below¹⁰³:

¹⁰² <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>.

¹⁰³ <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>.

Chart 11: Political Attitudes



As opposed to 1994 when 16% to 17% of Democrats and Republicans felt that citizens with alternative views were *very* unfavorable, today 38% to 43% of Democrats and Republicans feel this way, and 27% and 36% of Democrats and Republicans, respectively, feel even more strongly, believing that members of the opposite party are a threat to the nation's well-being.

This study also found that these beliefs are contributing to life choices made by both Democrats and Republicans about who to be friends with, where to live, and whether or not they approve of a family member's impending wedding.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of consistent conservatives and about half (49%) of consistent liberals say most of their close friends share their political views....People on the right and left also are more likely to say it is important to them to live in a place where most people share their political views, though again, that desire is more widespread on the right (50%) than on the left (35%). And while few Americans overall go so far as to voice disappointment with the prospect of a family member marrying a Democrat (8%) or a Republican (9%), that sentiment is not uncommon on the left or the right. Three-out-of-ten (30%) consistent conservatives say they would be unhappy if an immediate family member married a Democrat and about a quarter (23%) of across-the-board liberals say the same about the prospect of a Republican in-law¹⁰⁴.

While, as the quote above indicates, the majority of American's are not as divided as those who are consistent liberals or conservatives, those who participate most actively in the political process and voice their opinions most consistently are those with the most extreme ideological views and the greatest distrust and dislike of those with opposing views.

This antipathy, distrust, and dislike of people with differing political views is disturbing for the health of American democracy because it contributes to less dialogue among citizens with contradicting views as well as less willingness to compromise with members of the opposite party. This study also reveals that, as opposed to citizens with moderate views who view compromise as achieved when both sides meet each other in the middle, "consistent liberals and conservatives define ideal political compromise as one in which their side gets more of what it wants."¹⁰⁵ Hence, this polarization is

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>.

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>.

insulating entire sections of the populous from successful debate and realistic compromise.

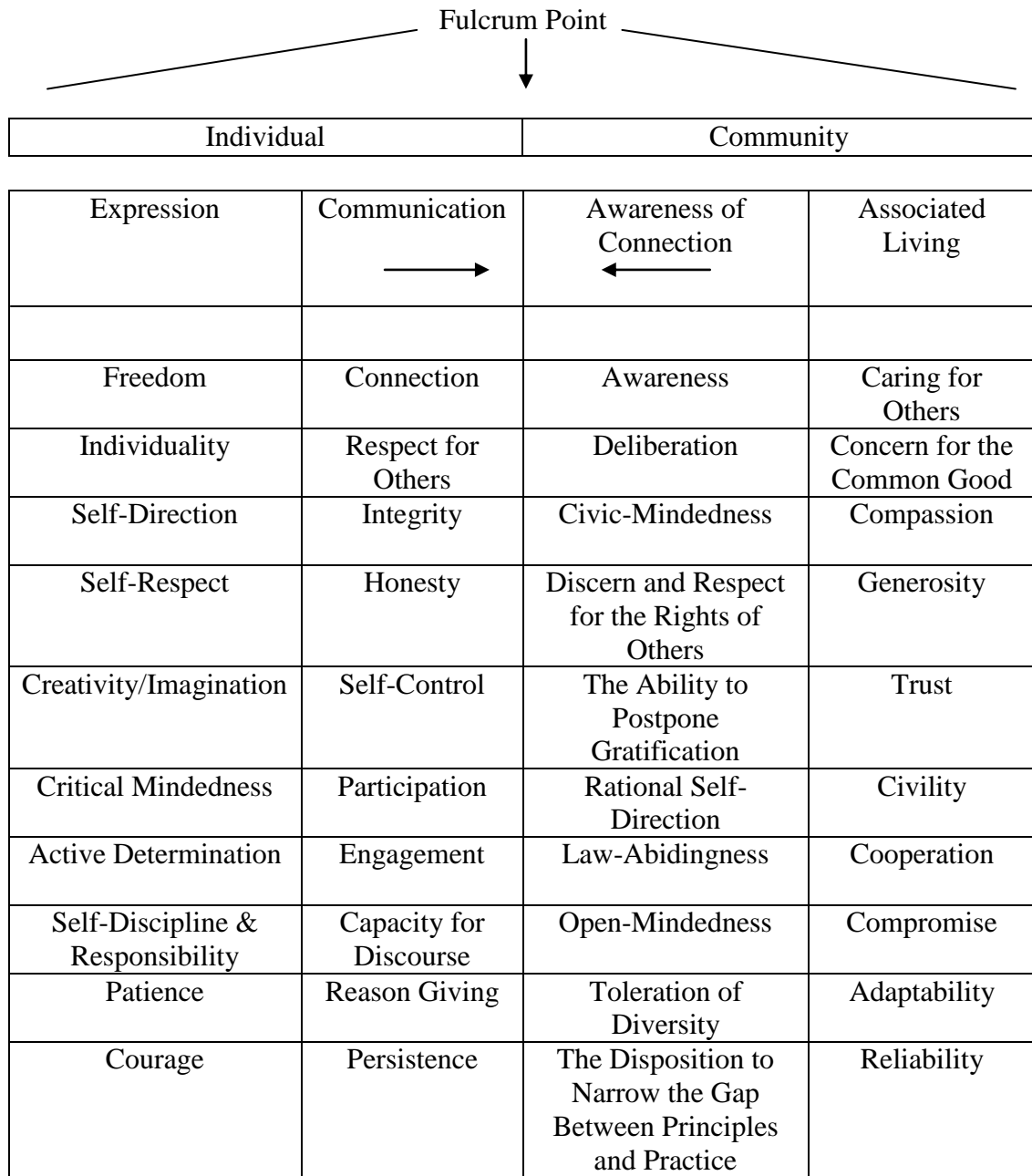
This study reveals dispositions within at least some of the American populous that can be characterized by close-mindedness, lack of trust, lack of civility, lack of cooperation, lack of compromise, lack of adaptability, lack of connection, and a lack of respect for others. The more moderate section of the populous, while more willing to consider conflicting views and to compromise with others, are largely unengaged in the political process and unexpressive of their views. Their behavior can be characterized by dispositions such as a lack of participation and engagement and a lack of personal responsibility for contributing to the direction of the country. In response to findings like these, the question arises as to what can be done to improve citizenship and prevent harmful beliefs and practices such as these. There are many ways to pursue an answer to this question. In this dissertation I pursue an answer by appealing to Dewey's theory of ideal democracy, in order to obtain guidelines by which we might improve American democracy today.

I examine Dewey's theory of democracy because it largely focuses on the characters and virtues of democratic citizens and the importance of democratic civic virtues for ideal democracy. Comparing Dewey's theory to modern citizenship, many of the issues in the study discussed above are highlighted by the lack of civic virtue displayed by American citizens in these instances. By defining an ideal democracy and its essential components – as espoused by Dewey – I identify guidelines by which civic

education can improve American citizenship through the development of the civic virtues found lacking in this study, as well as the development of other civic virtues identified as important for the health and depth of democracy. By examining an ideal democracy, America's shortcomings can be seen and defined more clearly, as well as guidance for its improvement identified.

In Chapters 1, 2, and 3, I identify four criteria – explained by Dewey – by which successful, healthy democratic citizenship can be defined in an ideal democracy: individual expression, communicated experience, associated living, and consciousness of the effect of one's behavior and choices on others and the common good of the country. Then, drawing on current literature on civic education and civic virtue, I compose a list of 40 civic virtues upon which the consistent practice of these four criteria seem to depend:

Chart 3: Examples of Democratic Civic Virtues



An important component, for democracy, of these criteria and virtues, according to Dewey, is that they be developed in a balanced way so that democratic citizens are

both expressive and communicative of their individual needs, desires, and judgments, as well as living in association with others and understanding the connection between their actions and the wellbeing of others. This balance between individualistic impulses and communal impulses allows a creative dynamic to develop within each citizen and throughout the democracy as a whole. Such a creative dynamic would help to prevent problems identified by the Pew Research discussed above: Moderate citizens who are willing to compromise and are not distrusting of citizens with alternate views, would be less likely to be disengaged from the political process. With strongly developed individual impulses, such citizens would be more inclined to express their views, to participate in the political process, and to feel responsibility for personally contributing to the guidance of the country. Likewise, citizens who have strong political views would be less likely to distrust and feel disconnected from citizens with alternative views, if their communal impulses were strongly developed. Strongly developed communal virtues would contribute to a strong desire for compromise and collaboration and would encourage adaptability as well as feelings of care and connection, even among citizens with contrary views.

In addition to identifying examples of civic virtues, the development of which could contribute to the improvement of civic education and citizenship in American, I also identify a list of 7 characteristics of successful civic education programs, compiled from both Dewey's discussion of democracy and contemporary suggestions for improved civic education:

- 1) General goals and methods for civic education should be provided but these should be flexible enough that the specifics of each school's needs, values, and inspirations can determine the details of the programs, and so each program can change as needed to address new problems and needs.
- 2) Ideals for our civic education programs should be cherished as leading to ever greater improvement. Although perfection should not be the goal, high objectives and standards are still essential to achieve improvement.
- 3) Civic education should focus on developing behaviors and traits that affect citizens' "ways of life," such that they embody a democratic way of being exemplified by awareness, participation, and engagement, through dispositions necessary for citizens to express themselves, communicate their experiences, live and work in association with others, and be conscious of the connection between their actions and the well-being of others.
- 4) Civic education programs should provide opportunities for students to contribute to others, their school, and the wider community by partaking in community service learning and contributing to communal celebrations and festivals.
- 5) Civic education should include many opportunities for students to participate in cooperative learning activities where they have ample opportunities to evaluate different options, work together with other students, and find mutually satisfying solutions.
- 6) Successful civic education should provide routine exposure to environments and behaviors that develop democratic civic virtues because habituation is necessary for their development.
- 7) Civic education should aim to develop democratic virtues within citizens in a balanced way that supports the development of both individual and communal dispositions, thus encouraging a creative dynamic.

By creating civic education programs in American schools that develop democratic civic virtues as well as meet the seven characteristics above, we can contribute to improved democratic citizenship.

As I discuss in Chapters 3 and 6, healthy citizenship, and thus successful civic education, requires adequate development of civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic

virtue. A detriment of all three contributes to the current problems with American democracy, and thus an improvement of citizenship will require an improved development of all three in American citizens. This dissertation focuses on only one component of this improvement: the improved development of democratic civic virtues. While the development of democratic civic virtues, dispositions, or ways of being, within American citizens will not be sufficient, by itself, for producing healthy citizens, the development of these virtues is essential. Without the development of such virtues, healthy democratic citizenship is unlikely.

The question then remains as to how we create civic education programs that meet the characteristics provided above and that adequately develop democratic civic virtues in citizens in a balanced way. My argument in this dissertation is that consciously designing school environments can importantly contribute to the achievement of improved civic education. My argument is based partially upon research done on habituation. In Chapter 4, I discuss research showing that the actions, feelings, and thoughts we routinely experience become habituated, and often unconscious, ways of being. Combining this information with research showing that human environments can affect behavior, feelings, and thoughts, I conclude that since students spend many hours a day, for many years of their lives, in school environments, the actions, feelings, and thoughts encouraged by these environments are likely to become habituated ways of being that will affect future inclinations and modes of civic participation.

For example, someone who feels a responsibility to contribute to the wellbeing of their environment and community is much more likely to participate politically than someone who has grown up disrespecting their environment and who feels that its care is the responsibility of someone else. Similarly, someone who is inclined to deal with conflict by looking for compromises that meet at least some of each party's needs is much more likely to approach political disagreements by looking for compromise than someone who believes adaptability is a sign of weakness and people with differing views are to be distrusted. In other words, our underlying dispositions or ways of being in the world affect the ways we participate (or remain unengaged) in the civic and political opportunities of citizenship: The kind of underlying person we are affects the kind of citizen we will be.

I provide further support for my thesis that school environments can contribute to the improvement of civic education in Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10, by discussing research that shows how specific aspects of the environment such as color, sound, and exposure to nature, can promote the characteristics and dispositions given in Chapter 2 as examples of democratic civic virtues. I also discuss research on stress and the correlation found between aesthetics such as disrepair, loud noise, and artificial lighting and anti-social and anti-democratic behaviors such as disrespect, lack of care, and an unwillingness or inability to compromise and work together with others. Consequently, this research confirms that school environments can contribute, either positively or negatively, to the behaviors, feelings, and thoughts students have while at school, which through their

continuous repetition are likely to become habituated ways of being. Depending on the aesthetics of the school environment, these habituated ways of being can either exemplify civic virtues or be contrary to them.

While these dispositions are not the only thing that will affect future civic behavior, they will play a role in defining the characteristics of this citizenship. They will play a role in determining whether citizens are engaged or disengaged; whether they are considerate of and caring for the needs of others or focused only on self-gain; and whether or not – among many other factors – citizens are likely to participate in effective dialogue and strive for compromise or whether they are likely to view members of the opposite political party as dangerous, undesirable people with whom they want little interaction or collaboration.

In Chapters 7 through 10, I also provide many examples of how schools can incorporate aesthetics beneficial for the development of civic virtues. By combining research from many different fields – political theory, philosophy, civic education, character education, environmental aesthetics, behavioral psychology, architecture, and education – my dissertation is able to show how a component of American schools that is commonly given little attention – the aesthetics of school environments – can be used to contribute to the improvement of civic education and the potential enhancement of citizenship. My dissertation also shows the beneficial effects of approaching such a topic from a cross-disciplinary perspective.

There are, however, many potential objections to and problems with my thesis. To begin with, someone might object that it is of little consequence whether citizens develop civic virtues when there are so many political structures, policies, and practices that make the kind of ideal citizenship and participation I advocate impossible. This objector might argue that I make it sound as if all that needs to happen for improved democracy is for citizens to become engaged, cooperative agents, when in fact most citizens in America in 2014 are prevented from exercising this kind of agency, for many reasons beyond a lack of civic virtues. This objector might protest that without first creating the kind of democracy I envision – a democracy that eliminates the forces and structures that defeat active citizenship generation after generation – there is little hope that even citizens with highly developed democratic civic virtues can become successful, active, participating citizens in our democracy as it currently stands.

My response to such an objection is that at the root of all changes – political, economic, legal, social, and institutional – are people. Unjust laws, ineffectual or overbearing institutions, and economic and social inequality, for example, are all created by, perpetuated by, and can be changed by the people who create and run them. Unjust laws, such as slavery, voting limitations, and segregation, can all trace their change, at least in part, to citizen activism. Without citizens who recognized a problem, expressed their views, and tried to communicate the need they saw for change, little transformation would have happened. Similarly, without citizens who listened to these pleas, and who

recognized the interrelation and association of all citizens' rights and wellbeing, little change could have occurred.

Equally, if corporations are spending a disproportionate amount of money in political races, or on lobbying, and this makes the activities of individual citizens ineffectual, then either the activities of these corporations or the laws defining their contributions need to change. And both changes will have to come from people who instigate the change. As discussed briefly in Chapter 2, the civic virtues of the people involved in institutions or involved in making the laws will have an effect on the behaviors of those institutions and on the laws that are created. Also, there is little hope for lasting economic or social change without the will of the people to back and support such a change. Ultimately, because even institutions, laws, and social conditions are created by at least a portion of the citizens in our country, there is little hope for their change or improvement without first improving the education of our citizens so that they can engage in this transformation in a democratically beneficial way.

My objector still may not be satisfied by such an answer. He might respond that my view of how things work in our country is naïve and mistaken, arguing that virtue has very little to do with any of the changes I describe. Rather, he might insist that most of what takes place in our country is a matter of power, control, and struggles for private gain, each instance of transformation the result of power struggles and changed dominance, as opposed to the result of collaboration, compromise, or concern for the common good. This was after all, he might argue, the perspective of the founders who

viewed the republic not as an attempt at ideal democracy – as Dewey has described it – but rather as a carefully crafted system of checks and balances, aimed at limiting competing powers.

I have a hard time arguing directly against such an objection. There is no doubt that the structure of institutions, the parameters set by laws, and social structures upheld by routine practices, all play a significant role in determining the potential engagement and civic behavior of citizens. However, I do not think recognizing the importance of such factors renders my suggestions unimportant. It seems impossible to deny that the characters and virtues (or lack thereof) of the people involved in these power struggles, in the running of institutions, or in the making of laws, will influence the decisions that are made. If people are educated to seek mutually beneficial compromise, to value expression, and to respect the view of others, it seems unimaginable that our country would not be different. Even the founders who created our republic of checks and balances recognized the integral importance of civic virtue in the citizenry. While I agree that creating more civically virtuous citizens will not automatically make our democracy ideal or allow us to live in perfect harmony, this lack of instant perfection also seems no reason to abandon the benefits that would likely come from consciously developing the characters of our citizen in a democratically virtuous way.

A second objection might be leveled at my thesis indicating that it would not be as easy as I suggest to pursue the development of civic virtue in schools, because there is actually a great deal of disagreement over which civic virtues are appropriate for teaching

in the public schools of a liberal democracy. Such an objector might maintain that to educate for virtue might well cut against education for autonomy, if for example, schools inculcate certain values as indispensable to good character, such as prayer or other religious beliefs. Another example highlighting how divided America is on the issue of civic virtue is same-sex marriage. Regarding this issue citizens raise claims of civic virtue both in its defense and its opposition. Those who support same-sex marriage argue that civic equality and freedom support its legalization, whereas those who oppose it argue that the common good, the fabric of our civic structure, and the wellbeing of families and children require that it remain illegal. Among such disagreements, where, my objector might ask, is a public school supposed to find common ground upon which to base the civic education of its students?

My response to this objection is that many of the difficulties and disagreements that occur over civic virtue have not so much to do with which virtues are important but rather with the ways in which these virtues might be developed. For example, few democratic citizens would outrightly disagree that caring for others, personal integrity, and generosity are important civic virtues, however staunch disagreement may arise between those who think these virtues should be cultivated through religious practices, such as prayer, in schools, and those who believe such practices infringe on other important rights such as freedom of religion. Similarly, disagreement over the legality of same-sex marriage is not really a disagreement over which civic virtues are important. Citizens on both sides of the issue undoubtedly agree that civic equality, freedom, the

common good, the fabric of our civic structure, and the wellbeing of families and children are all important civic virtues. The disagreement is not over these fundamental virtues and whether they are important for democracy but, rather, over the nature of same-sex marriage and perhaps over the definition of marriage and its legal role all together. My point is that the ardent disagreements we see in America today are over specific practices and whether or not they meet the standards of civic virtue upon which, for the most part, the majority of American citizens agree.

This objection highlights one of the reasons improving civic education and the development of democratic civic virtues through the design of school environments is especially appropriate and beneficial. Such a method of developing civic virtues allows for the development of civic virtue in the most general sense without the implementation of potentially conflict-ridden methods or content. There are, for example, many ways to develop the disposition in a child to care for others. This can be developed through the practice and study of numerous different religions or through discussions of specific situations and pronouncements of how students should act and feel in such events, etc. While all of these methods are likely to create disagreement, it seems unlikely that anyone would disagree with children learning to care for others through the indirect encouragement of such practices by, for example, decreasing classroom noise level so that stress, irritability, and aggression is limited; or by designing spaces for group work and collaboration that encourage care and connection to develop; or by increasing exposure to nature, wherein children are found to be more caring. One of the benefits of

improving civic education and the development of civic virtues through school environments is that general democratic civic dispositions, with which virtually everyone can agree, can be developed within students without requiring agreement on the particulars of any specific application of these virtues.

Because the design of school environments can develop both individual and communal impulses in a balanced and general way, it is a perfect method for recognizing the importance of civic virtues and committing to their development in public schools without requiring agreement on anything more difficult than what colors to paint the classroom. The general examples of civic virtues given in Chapter 2 have limited room for disagreement, so long as they are all developed in a balanced way and neither personal freedom nor community well-being is emphasized at the expense of the other. As I discuss in Chapter 2, I think Dewey's view of civic virtue relegates much of the philosophic debate over the conflict between virtues such as cooperation, care, and concern for the common good and liberal autonomy, free-thinking, and individual judgment unnecessary. By emphasizing that both individual as well as communal dispositions are essential civic virtues for democracy, this ensures that neither set will be developed to the detriment of the other, and beauty, art, and aesthetics in our schools provide an exemplary method for accomplishing this task of balanced development.

Moving from theoretical objections to objections of a more practical nature, someone might object that the current financial situation in most school districts makes many – if not all – my suggestions obsolete and impracticable. My first response is that

before funding can increase or the allocation of existing funding can change, to support the kinds of suggestions I make in this dissertation, perspectives have to change. Without an understanding of how beneficial the conscious design of school environments can be for the cultivation of healthy school communities and the development of civic virtues, there is little chance that funding will ever be available. This dissertation aims at spreading awareness of the importance of school environments for their contribution to the development of student characters and dispositions. Additionally, even if some of the suggestions I make are never achieved in schools, because they are too expensive, this does not make their discussion irrelevant. Rather, by presenting ideal visions of the aesthetic beauty that could exist in our schools, I hope to inspire a desire for change that is great enough to facilitate all the details involved in making the improvement of schools a reality, even if the actual changes made end up being less significant than the ones I suggest.

My second response is that while many schools have little to no extra money to spend on the improvement of their environments, there are also many schools currently being built or being renovated. This means that there is money being spent on the creation and improvement of many school environments and the only question is what type of environments will be created with the already allocated funds. In many cases considering school design from the perspective of its effects on student senses and the consequences of such effects on the development of dispositions – either detrimental or beneficial – to successful civic education, is not part of the design process. In such cases,

civic education could be improved by implementing the suggestions I make throughout the dissertation.

My third response is that I believe there are potent opportunities for private-public partnerships between schools and their surrounding communities that could fund school-improvement initiatives. For example, many schoolyard gardens are currently provided funding through successful public-private partnerships, as discussed at the 2013 Schoolyard Gardens Conference.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, I believe such partnerships would become more prevalent if the relationship between school environments and healthy citizenship were understood and recognized. Once this important relationship is recognized, funding school improvements becomes no longer just about making nicer places for students to go to school but instead becomes about supporting the very foundation of our democracy.

There are also opportunities for federal funding and support for schools that attempt to improve civic outcomes through the improvement of school aesthetics. As discussed in Chapter 5, the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities is advocating the use of art in schools in their Turnaround Arts initiative. This initiative is another public-private partnership that helps to increase art in failing public schools with high poverty levels. By extending the understanding of arts to include the aesthetics of school environments and by recognizing the benefit of these initiatives for improved civic

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.arboretum.umn.edu/2013SchoolyardGardens.aspx>

education, initiatives such as the Turnaround Arts initiative could include the improvement of school environments and provide funding and research for such projects.

A final objection might be leveled at my thesis stating that the role of the environment on student behavior is so complex that evidence of simple causal relationships is too difficult to achieve. Such an objector might point out further that “beautiful school aesthetics,” which I discuss and advocate, are even more problematic because there is no clear measure of beauty and no consistent agreement about what is beautiful. Finally, this objector might protest that there simply is not enough research directed specifically at the aesthetic elements of school environments I propose improving and their resulting development of improved civic behavior and dispositions.

I agree with the statements made by this final objection: the effects of environments are complex, simple causal relationships are difficult to prove, beauty is illusive and hard to define, and there is little research directed specifically at attempting to demonstrate the truth of my thesis. However, I do not find any of these facts to mean that implementing improved school environments for the benefit of civic education programs will not be successful or should not be attempted. Just because something has not yet been done, or is difficult to achieve, does not mean it is impossible or that it is not worth the effort. Rather, the arguments and research I present in this dissertation provide reasons to believe that school environments can have a significant impact on the development of democratic civic virtues. Especially with this being the case, our schools, students, and democracy would benefit greatly from further research that could provide

more detailed information on how best to design our schools for the purpose of improving civic education. While I am not a researcher in the fields of environmental aesthetics, behavioral psychology, or cognitive neuroscience, I will make some cursory suggestions for future research that I think would add greatly to our knowledge of the effects of school environments on student character. Hopefully, these suggestions will provide impetus for those in the relevant fields to carry out the in-depth research that would be so beneficial to the improvement of school environments and consequently to the improvement of civic education programs in American schools.

Studies could be done that try to gain an understanding of the effects of school rooms that students find aesthetically beautiful and those that they find unappealing or ugly. One example of such a study would be to have students rank several classrooms on how attractive or beautiful they find them. Then, students could spend several weeks – or months – learning in each classroom and after this time they could be tested for civic virtues such as helping others, tolerance of difference, self-direction, etc. Realistically, it seems that 40 different studies could be done in this manner, each one testing for the effects of the aesthetic evaluation of students on their demonstration of each of the 40 examples of civic virtues give in Chapter 2.

One of the greatest difficulties with such studies lies in controlling for unintended factors that unknowingly affect the outcome. In order to rule out the potential causal effect of unintended elements, as many factors as possible would need to be held steady across classrooms, such as: teachers, types of instruction, activities, seating arrangements,

season, number of students, etc. Likewise, in order to gain clear indication of a relationship between any particular aesthetic characteristic and such development it would likely be necessary to change as few elements as possible between classrooms found beautiful and those judged to be ugly. Specific studies, such as these, that attempt to draw a relationship between particular aesthetics of school environments and the development of specific civic virtues would greatly increase our knowledge and give valuable direction to the design of learning environments.

Larger scale studies could also be carried out between otherwise similar schools, some of which implement a portion of the improvements I suggest and others that remain unchanged. Measuring changes related to the development of civic virtues within the entire student body based on the aesthetic changes I suggest, would also provide useful information. Aside from behavioral/aesthetic studies such as these, there is also reason to believe that neurological studies could provide helpful information in understanding what and how aesthetic aspects of an environment might affect the development of civic virtues.

For example, in a 2006 study, *Brain Correlates of Aesthetic Judgment of Beauty*, carried out by Thomas Jacobsen, Ricarda I. Schubotz, Lea Hofel, and D. Yves v. Cramon, subjects were shown black and white geometric shapes, with a range of symmetry and complexity, and asked to indicate whether they were beautiful or not-beautiful. The study was able to map which parts of the brain were activated by judgments of beauty and not-beauty. They were also able to map areas of activation

based on symmetry, which allowed them to distinguish between the parts of the brain involved in aesthetic judgments beyond judgments of symmetry. The additional part of the brain was found to overlap with those known to be involved in social (Cunningham et al, 2003; Johnson et al., 2002) and moral judgment (Moll et al., 2001; Greene et al., 2001). Although the researchers did not draw this conclusion, it seems possible that such a connection might provide a partial explanation for why or how aesthetic judgment can aid in the development of civic virtues, i.e., by strengthening the part of the brain responsible for social and moral judgments the ability to make such judgments might also be strengthened.

There was also an additional and important part of the brain found to be involved when someone is asked if they find something beautiful: the part of the brain identified with introspective evaluation of internal mental states such as one's own thoughts and feelings (Christoff and Gabrieli, 2000). Again, it seems possible that this process of aesthetic evaluation may strengthen the ability of introspection and evaluation of one's own mental states by developing the same part of the brain. And if this part of the brain is useful for analyzing one's own behavior and intentions in social/relational activities, presumably, then, it would also be involved in things like honesty, care, respect, and integrity. This study and its findings does not reach this far or make these connections, however, it seems a promising area for further research in order to determine if there is a relationship between strengthening parts of the brain used for social and moral judgments – by making aesthetic judgments – and a consequent development of civic virtues.

If such a connection could be substantiated then this would have important implications for the design of school environments: Schools filled with a variety of aesthetics aimed at creating pleasant sensorial experiences provide ample opportunity for students to be aware of their environment and to make continuous aesthetic judgments. The occurrence of such aesthetic judgments could be further facilitated by involving students in the process of improving their school environments, requiring them to aesthetically evaluate their school spaces and decide on how best to improve them. However, schools designed with chain link fences, heavy doors, and windowless classrooms – structures more and more like prisons, as described by Taylor (1978) – “have little to do with creative learning, nor do they act as a support system for learning. Sensory deprivation exists. Visual perception and aesthetic judgmental decisions are impossible” (p. 10) in such spaces. Therefore, if students are in schools that provide little opportunity for aesthetic judgment, they would be missing an opportunity for activating the part of the brain that also contributes to social and moral judgment and the development of civic virtues important for democratic citizenship. If studies found that such connections were valid, it would provide further evidence that schools should be designed to include the beneficial aesthetic factors I suggest in this dissertation. In these ways, further research could provide additional support and direction for improving school aesthetics in order to provide successful civic education.

In this dissertation I provide both general explanations and specific examples of how the aesthetics of school environments can contribute to the development and practice

of the democratic civic virtues that underlie individual expression, communication, associated living, and consciousness of the connection between individuals. By respecting, developing, and strengthening a broad range of democratic civic virtues, the aesthetics of school environments can also help to develop a creative dynamic, which can be harnessed by democratic citizens so that they can become artists of democracy: citizens who create, contribute to, and transform the world around them.

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