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Sheena Varghese

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# GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING ART TO STUDENTS FROM URBAN HIGH-POVERTY BACKGROUNDS

by

SHEENA VARGHESE

Under the Direction of Melanie Davenport, PhD

## ABSTRACT

This study concerns the use of character education practices in schools and how these practices can be integrated into the art education curriculum to benefit students from urban high-poverty backgrounds. I conducted a document analysis of research in character education referring to methods of integrating character education skills into classroom practice. I identified character education programs that provide instruction in the areas of the emotional resources that Payne (2013) suggests that students from high-poverty backgrounds lack. Then, I made connections between how these identified character education skills align to the studio habits of mind (Hetland, 2013) that the visual arts have been suggested to develop in students to create guidelines for art educators to implement in their classrooms.

INDEX WORDS: Urban art education, Low-income communities, High-poverty backgrounds, Character education, Grit, Self-Control, Optimism, Social intelligence

GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING ART TO STUDENTS FROM URBAN HIGH-POVERTY  
BACKGROUNDS

by

SHEENA VARGHESE

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Art Education

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2015

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2015

GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING ART TO STUDENTS FROM URBAN HIGH-POVERTY  
BACKGROUNDS

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May 2015

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my former, current and future students. I am lucky to have a job that brings me so much joy every single day. My students and their families are my inspiration to continue working in urban high-poverty communities in Atlanta.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Many thanks to Dr. Melanie Davenport for her constant support and optimism. I have learned so much from your guidance. To Dr. Melody Milbrandt and Dr. Kevin Hsieh, thank you for giving me new insight and fresh perspectives on my work. Thank you to all three of you for providing me with a great foundation of art education knowledge to work from in creating this study. I also want to acknowledge my family and friends who have supported me throughout my time in graduate school. Thank you.

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## 1 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Educational achievement across socioeconomic levels in the United States is not equitable. The educational system is currently failing our students from low-income communities. As a middle school visual arts and special education teacher in an urban school where 98 percent of students are eligible for the free or reduced lunch program, I experience the effects of poverty in the classroom on a daily basis. Students from poverty deal with a lack of resources beyond mere financial security. According to Payne (2013), students living in poverty often experience a lack of control over their emotional responses echoing their frequent lack of control over their circumstances; a lack of security in physical health services and mobility; a lack of access to external support systems of friends and family when in need; a lack of role models who are positive, nurturing and free of tendencies toward self-destructive behavior; a lack of knowledge of hidden rules of the middle- and upper-classes; and a lack of competence of the formal registers of language necessary for success in work and school (Payne, 2013).

The main focus of our educational system is to push our students toward achieving academic outcomes that are often statistically unattainable within one school year given their current levels of performance. With the new Common Core State Standards, the levels of achievement required by students are set to even higher levels of rigor. Though these new standards were created to equalize the learning outcomes among all students in the nation, this new higher bar sets the expected level of performance even farther out of reach of many of our students in low-income communities. As a teacher who teaches general core subject academic content to my students every day, it is clear that further interventions beyond academic support need to be in place to level the playing field with higher-income peers.

## 1.1 The Impact of Poverty on Education

The impact of poverty on educational success is well documented in numerous studies. Based on research by the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University (2013), there are virtually no differences in mental ability among infants before their first birthday based upon race or social class status, and the few differences that do exist can be explained by a few social class indicators (such as access to broader language exposure). However, compared to higher-income students, significant gaps for lower-income students are evident in virtually every measure of achievement by adolescence: NAEP math and reading test scores, high school completion rates, college enrollment rates, and college completion rates (*The Achievement*, 2013). In addition, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011) report *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972-2009*, the dropout rate of students living in a low-income family was about five times greater than the rate of their peers from high-income families (7.4 versus 1.4 percent) in 2009. According to data from the Georgia Department of Education “2012 4-Year Cohort Graduation Report” compiled by Public Broadcasting Atlanta (2012), Atlanta Public Schools high school completion rate for the 2011-12 school year was only 50.87 percent compared to the statewide average graduation rate of 69.7 percent.

A recent study led by UCLA researcher James Catterall (2012) has shown strong correlations between rich arts involvement and academic and social achievement in students living specifically in high-poverty contexts. Though students with high-socioeconomic backgrounds did receive gains from arts participation as well, they were much smaller than the levels experienced by students living in high-poverty situations (Catterall, 2012). Catterall does not identify what aspect of arts engagement creates this increase in achievement, but he does

solidly present the connection between higher achievement and arts participation in low-income populations. This research supports the idea that more arts initiatives would benefit students in high-poverty schools. Along with students from low-income backgrounds having greater access to arts instruction in the school, art educators need to be better prepared to teach in these challenging environments. Art educators who teach in high-poverty urban districts are often ill-equipped to negotiate the many issues that permeate into the classroom. Though it should not be assumed that teachers in high-poverty areas would lower their expectations for their students, these teachers need additional and specific support to address the concerns unique to urban art education and education of students living in poverty.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

Recently, there has been a rise in interest and research into how character education plays a significant role in leading to successful outcomes in students, particularly with those students immersed in high-poverty contexts. The purpose of this study is to review best practices in character education and findings from social and emotional research in urban educational settings and to develop guidelines for art educators teaching students from urban high-poverty backgrounds. In this paper, I refer to character education as an umbrella term for educational practices involving intentional social and emotional instruction to develop in young people core ethical and performance values such as grit, perseverance, self-control, motivation and interpersonal awareness (“Character Education,” 2010). This term “character education” is sometimes referred to as moral education or values education.

This research is necessary for urban high-poverty art educators to address the lack of emotional resources which Payne proposes as one aspect of her definition of poverty (2013). This involves being able to control and choose your emotional responses and withstand difficult

and uncomfortable emotional situations and feelings. Emotional resources give you the ability to choose not to engage in destructive behaviors towards one's self and towards others. One of the most important aspects of emotional resources is the ability to break from old patterns of behavior. To move from poverty to the middle-class, an individual must be able to suspend his/her emotional inclinations. The situations and hidden rules of the middle-class are typically very unlike what a child coming from a high-poverty context has experienced previously. To be able to suspend adherence to previous experiences, a certain level of persistence is necessary to stay with the situation until it can be learned, regardless of uncomfortable feelings. The ability to show persistence indicates that emotional resources are present (Payne, 2013). As Catterall has demonstrated, arts engagement positively impacts the achievement of students from high-poverty backgrounds, but he does not identify which factor in the arts produces this impact. In this study, I propose that the impact of the arts on social emotional growth of students from high-poverty backgrounds amounts to this increase in achievement. This study adds to the literature in art education guidelines for how character education can be integrated into the urban high-poverty art classroom as an effective strategy for helping students achieve lasting outcomes.

### **1.3 Need for the Study**

Within the field of art education, interest in the unique needs of urban students is increasing. For example, a recent volume edited by Hutzell, Bastos, and Cosier (2012) highlights the role of art in transforming city schools. However, they do not specifically address urban high-poverty schools. Based on 2009-2010 school year data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2010), 19.4 percent of 5- to 17-year-olds in families are living in poverty in the United States. Of the 19.4 percent of students living in poverty throughout the United States, 24.9 percent live in a city locale. According to these statistics, one in five students

in the United States lives in poverty. These statistics use free or reduced lunch program participation as an economic indicator of poverty. However, economic well-being is not the only defining factor of poverty. Given that an average art education classroom is comprised of around thirty students, the NCES statistics suggest that approximately six students in every art education classroom live in poverty.

It is important to note that the NCES data does not equate urban populations with poverty. Nationally, only 24.9 percent of school-age children living in city locales are living in poverty. However, the term urban education often used in research does not refer to the entire urban population, but rather the public school population where poverty rates are often much higher. According to data from the Kids Count Data Center (2013), 75.4 percent of students in the urban Atlanta Public Schools district were eligible for free or reduced lunch (185 to 130 percent of the federal poverty guidelines) compared to 52.0 percent of children in the city of Atlanta who are living at 150 percent of the federal poverty guidelines in 2013. Even though the NCES statistics indicate only 24.9 percent of families in cities live in poverty, individual snapshots of cities' public school populations paint a vastly different picture.

Further, the NCES (2009) aggregated the percentage of public schools reporting selected discipline problems that occurred at school, by frequency and school characteristics during the 2007-2008 school year. In the total school population nationally, student verbal abuse of teachers occurred in 6.0 percent of schools at least once a week, student acts of disrespect occurred in 10.5 percent of schools at least once a week, and widespread disorder in classrooms occurred in 4.0 percent of schools at least once a week. In schools characterized as having 76-100 percent of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch, student verbal abuse of teachers occurred in 12.8 percent of schools at least once a week, student acts of disrespect occurred in 19.2 percent of



schools at least once a week, and widespread disorder in classrooms occurred in 10.0 percent of schools at least once a week. As indicated by this data, schools serving greater numbers of students living in poverty experience the three indicated discipline problems at twice the rate of the general population. Given this information, art teachers need to be equipped with an understanding about why there is a correlation between students living in poverty and discipline problems, especially with regard to the emotional resources unavailable to students in poverty. Further, they need to be provided strategies, such as character education guidelines, to help students from high-poverty backgrounds develop their emotional resources.

#### **1.4 Definition of Key Terms**

*Poverty*: the extent to which an individual does without resources. These resources are financial, emotional, mental/cognitive, spiritual, physical, support systems, relationship/role models, knowledge of hidden rules and language/formal register (as defined by Payne, 2013).

*Students from high-poverty backgrounds*: students who were raised for the majority of childhood and adolescence without resources above (as defined by Payne, 2013).

*Urban schools*: school territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with population of 250,000 or more (defined as a large city locale by the National Center for Educational Statistics – revised definition as of 2006).

*Character education*: umbrella term for educational practices involving intentional social and emotional instruction to develop in young people core ethical and performance values such as grit, perseverance, self-control, motivation and interpersonal awareness (*Character Education*, 2010).

In this introduction, I provided an overview of the emotional needs and concerns of students living in poverty in our school systems. Poverty is not only defined as a dearth of

financial resources, but also a lack of emotional and various other resources. In the next chapter, I look more closely at the literature in art education that addresses issues of poverty and urban education within the art education framework. Then in the following chapter, I explain my methodology and research questions more fully.

## 2 CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I examined the literature in art education that addresses issues of poverty and urban education to create a space for my study. Some of the literature about poverty and urban education will naturally overlap as urban is often used to refer to low-income populations. In the urban education sections, I reviewed more place-based theories in art education about how the city impacts arts education; however, within the poverty section, I closely reviewed literature about working with low-income students through arts education.

### 2.1 Art Education in High-Poverty Contexts

Recent studies show that students living in poverty are receiving less art education than their higher-income peers (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011). Over the past thirty years, arts education participation has dropped significantly and steadily, especially for students from low-income communities. Data from the national *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* conducted since 1930 shows that the proportion of students receiving any arts instruction has dropped steadily since its peak in 1985 with visual arts, music and creative writing showing the sharpest declines (Walsh, 2011). Though this issue is widespread across the nation, it has impacted students from low-income communities to the greatest extent. *Arts education in America: What the decline means for arts participation*, a study sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and conducted by Nick Rabkin and E. C. Hedberg (2011) at the University of Chicago, found that arts learning has a more significant effect on low-income student achievement than it does compared to higher-income students and that the effects of arts involvement on low-income youth are sustained well into young adulthood.

The study also found that there was a decline in childhood arts education concentrated among low-income children and children of African American and Hispanic backgrounds. Young adults in the lowest socioeconomic status category were least likely to have any arts education in their childhood across all four *Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts* from 1982 to 2008. By contrast, the young adults with the highest socioeconomic status backgrounds were consistently more likely to have childhood art education. In 2008, the adults with highest socioeconomic status were 17% less likely to have had a childhood arts education than the adults of 1982, while the adults with lowest socioeconomic status were nearly 77% less likely to have had childhood arts education than the adults in 1982. In addition, students of Hispanic and African American backgrounds have seen the most dramatic drops in access from 1982 to 2008 from 40 and 49 percent respectively versus the decrease for White students of just 5 percent (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011). This gap stems from substantial cuts to school arts programs which are typically the only source of arts instruction for low-income students, while wealthier students have greater access to private art classes, theater/art/music camps, and private tutors.

Despite these consistent research trends that art access is limited for individuals from low-income communities, the gap still exists today. In a statement from 2010, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan acknowledged that:

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds...do not get the enrichment experiences of affluent students anywhere except at school. President Obama recalls that when he was a child 'you always had an art teacher and a music teacher. Even in the poorest school districts everyone had access to music and other arts.' Today, sadly that is no longer the case. (Rabkin, 2011, p.6)

In the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools (2012) 1999-2000 and 2009-10 report, Duncan also remarked that this was “absolutely an equity issue and a civil rights issue” (p. 6).

A recent study of New York City high schools compared arts resources in schools grouped by graduation rate. Schools in the bottom third of graduation rates (less than 50% graduation rate) offered the least access to arts education – fewer certified arts teachers per student, fewer dedicated arts spaces, and fewer arts and culture partnerships. The 2009 report by the Center for Arts Education reported that the students in New York’s public schools who would benefit from arts engagement the most have the least opportunity to participate in arts learning. Another study by SRI International of the statewide arts education access in California presented similar findings. Only 25% of students in high-poverty settings had music compared to 45% in higher-income settings. Similar inequities were found in all other art disciplines including visual arts education (*Reinvesting*, 2011).

### ***2.1.1 A study of the correlations between arts and achievement in high-poverty students.***

There is clear evidence that an arts gap exists for students from low-income communities, but why should this be of concern? The arts are often considered an expendable part of the curriculum when making budget cuts, yet research proves that arts education benefits students from low-income communities the most of all students in our schools. The *Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth* study led by a UCLA researcher James Catterall (2012) analyzed four different longitudinal studies to determine how academic and civic behavior outcomes of youth and young adults is influenced by their engagement with the arts in school.

In the study, Catterall used four large national databases to analyze the relationship between arts involvement and academic and social achievements: *National Education Longitudinal Study* (1988); *Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class* (1998-1999); *Education Longitudinal Study* (2002) and the *National Longitudinal Survey of Youth* (1997). The first three databases are sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, while the last is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor. All four of these large datasets allow the researcher to track a nationally representative sample of children over time, including multiple waves of collection spanning different years and age groups. Depending on the database, some of the arts variables measured included: course-taking in music, dance, theater, and the visual arts; out-of-school arts lessons; and membership, participation, or leadership in arts organizations and activities (i.e. band or theater). A scale of arts engagement was created, ranging from high to low, based on these aforementioned arts variables.

Catterall (2012) chose to focus his analysis on students who came from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds, because the additional enrichment in the form of extra arts classes, lessons, or opportunities for arts attendance provided by more affluent schools to students from higher socioeconomic groups could not be randomly controlled by the researcher and may have influenced the level of achievement. The study purposefully focused on students from low-income communities to isolate whether an *arts-rich* education does impact future student outcomes. Low-income was defined by the study as students who ranked in the bottom quartile of socioeconomic levels for a given database. The report refers to these students, as in its title, by the phrase “at risk.”

### **2.1.2 Achievement advantages from arts-rich education for high-poverty students.**

In a previous study from 2009 described in his book *Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art: A 12-Year Study of Arts Education*, Catterall (2012) mined only the *National*

*Education Longitudinal Survey* database and found that students from low-socioeconomic status backgrounds with *high arts* involvement demonstrated higher achievement on all of the following indicators when compared to their low-income peers with *low arts* involvement: attending college after high school (71% versus 48%); attending a four-year college (30% versus 17%); earned an Associate's degree as highest degree (24% versus 10%); earned a Bachelor's degree as highest degree (18% versus 6%); earned a graduate or professional degree as highest degree (1% versus 0%) and earned mostly grades of As in college (15% versus 9%). This data is depicted in Figure 2.1.

Percent of Young Adults Who Attended College  
and Achieved College-Related Outcomes (2000)  
*Low-SES Students*

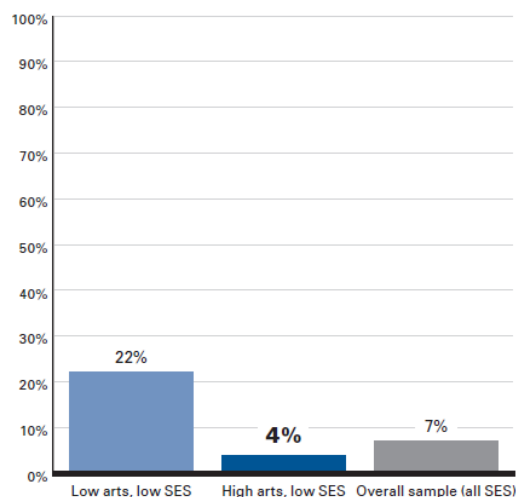
	Low arts	High arts
<b>Ever attended college after high school</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>Ever attended a four-year college</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>If they attended college:</b>		
Earned as highest degree:		
Associate's degree	<b>10%</b>	<b>24%</b>
Bachelor's degree	<b>6%</b>	<b>18%</b>
Graduate or professional degree	0%	1%
Earned mostly A's in college	9%	15%

Note: Differences shown in bold are statistically significant.

Source: NELS:88. From 1988, when participants were in the 8th grade, to 2000, when most had turned 26.

**Figure 2.1 Percent of Young Adults Who Attended College**

Percent of 13- to 17-Year-Olds Who Did Not Graduate from High School (2008)



Source: NLSY97. From 1998, when participants were 13–17 years old, to 2008.

Note: Arts course credits from high school transcripts are the sole indicators of arts engagement in the NLSY97 database.

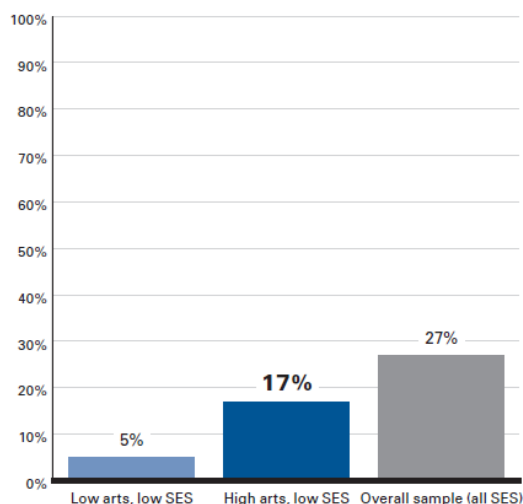
### Figure 2.2 Percent of Teens Who Did Not Graduate from High School

In the key findings of his 2012 study, Catterall demonstrated that teenagers and young adults from low-income backgrounds who had a history of high arts involvement show better academic outcomes than peers from low-income backgrounds who had a history of low arts involvement, earning both better grades and higher rates of college enrollment and completion. Eighth grade students who had high levels of arts engagement from kindergarten through elementary school showed higher test scores than their peers with low-arts engagement over the same time period. Students who had arts-rich experiences in high school were more likely to complete a calculus course and receive higher grade-point averages (GPA) in math than students who had low-arts experiences in high school. Two separate databases in the study showed that students from low-income backgrounds with high arts involvement in high school earned higher overall GPA's than low-income students without arts involvements (2.63 versus 2.41 in one study and 2.94 versus 2.55 in the other) (Catterall, 2012, p. 13). Another finding is that high school students who earned few or no art credits were five times more likely to not graduate



from high school than their low-income peers who earned many art credits (22% versus 4%) (Figure 2.2). Also, low-income eighth and twelfth grade students with high arts involvement were more likely to aspire to college than similar aged low-income students with low-arts involvement (74% versus 43% for eighth grade students and 61% versus 42% for twelfth grade students). The study also found that low-income students with high arts involvement went on to enroll in four-year colleges and highly or moderately selective four-year colleges at higher rates than low arts students (32% versus 19% in four-year colleges and 41% versus 26% in highly or moderately selective four-year colleges in 2006). Yet another key finding was that students who had high arts engagement were three times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree (17% versus 5%) (Figure 2.3). They were also more likely to earn “mostly A’s” in college (15% versus 9%).

Percent of Young Adults Who Had Earned a Bachelor's Degree (2008)



Source: NLSY97. From 1998, when participants were 13–17 years old, to 2008.

Note: Arts course credits from high school transcripts are the sole indicators of arts engagement in the NLSY97 database.

### Figure 2.3 Percent of Young Adults with Bachelor's Degrees

#### 2.1.3 *Other positive outcomes from arts-rich education for students from high-poverty backgrounds.*

In addition to the academic outcomes cited above, students from low-income backgrounds who were considered to have high arts involvement were also significantly more

likely than students with low arts exposure to participate in extracurricular activities and intramural sports in high school and in college (Catterall, 2012). Compared to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who had low arts involvement, low-income students with high arts involvement were almost twice as likely to participate in intramural sports (20% versus 11%), more than twice as likely to belong to academic honor societies (17% versus 7%) and almost three times as likely to work on the school yearbook or newspaper (20% versus 7%). Conversely, twice as many students with low-income backgrounds and low arts involvement were found to participate in no extracurricular activities (24% of high arts students did not participate in any activities versus 50% of low arts students who did not participate) (Figure 2.4).

Percent of 12th Graders Who Participated in Selected Extracurricular Activities (2004)

	Low SES		Overall sample	High SES	
	Low arts	High arts		Low arts	High arts
<b>Participated in:</b>					
Intramural sports	11%	20%	19%	21%	22%
Interscholastic sports	23%	31%	38%	<b>55%</b>	<b>37%</b>
Academic honor society	7%	17%	23%	<b>34%</b>	<b>47%</b>
School yearbook or newspaper	7%	20%	16%	12%	19%
<b>No extracurricular participation</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>24%</b>	30%	<b>24%</b>	<b>5%</b>

Note: Differences shown in bold are statistically significant.  
Source: ELS:2002. From 2002, when participants were in 10th grade, to 2004, when most participants had completed 12th grade.

**Figure 2.4 Percent of 12th Graders Who Participated in Extracurricular Activities**

Another area analyzed in the study led by Catterall (2012) was civic engagement. Teenagers and young adults who experiences high arts involvement in high school were more likely to show civic-minded behavior than those who had low arts experiences. In low-income

student groups, eighth grade students with a history of arts engagement were much more likely to read a newspaper at least one day in the past week than their low arts peers (73% versus 44%). Another finding was that low-income students with arts-rich experiences participated in student government and school service clubs at four times the rate of low-income peers who lacked those experiences (16% versus 4% for student government participation; 19% versus 5% for school service club participation). Also, students with low-income backgrounds who had arts-rich experiences in high school were more likely than others with low arts experiences to have volunteered recently (47% versus 26% for having volunteered within the last two years; 28% versus 20% for having volunteered at least once a month). Another civic factor analyzed in this study was likelihood to vote or be involved in a political campaign. Young adults who had high arts involvement in high school were more likely to be involved than young adults who had low arts involvement (78% versus 67% for having registered to vote; 43% versus 29% for having voted in a local election; 45% versus 31% for having voted in the 2004 national election; and 4.1% versus 2.9% for participating in a political campaign). These differences between high arts and low arts engagement was seen only between young adults from low-income backgrounds. Throughout the analysis of the longitudinal studies, high-income students received a boost, but their gain was less dramatic.

Overall, Catterall's (2012) study concluded with three main findings: 1) low-income students who have arts-rich education show more positive outcomes later in their lives; 2) at-risk teenagers and young adults with intensive arts experiences show achievement levels close to and sometimes exceeding that of the general population without accounting for socioeconomic differences; and 3) most positive outcomes between arts involvement and academic outcomes only apply to students from low-income communities. Although these positive outcomes were

found in low-income students who experienced high arts involvement, Catterall (2012) makes clear that the results do not support a cause-and-effect relationship between arts involvement and academic or social achievements. Rather, the data suggests a correlation between the two variables. In his conclusion, Catterall (2012) suggests that further research controlling for a wide array of individual and social variables would be needed to establish a causal relationship. Regardless, the information in Catterall's study provides helpful information to advance our understanding of the behavioral patterns of youth populations that do and do not have arts-rich backgrounds.

#### **2.1.4 National support for art education as a high-poverty reform strategy.**

The benefits of arts instruction for students living in poverty seem to be well-established. Recently, President Obama's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) announced a new program called Turnaround Arts which is designed to narrow the achievement gap by aggressively deploying arts education in high-poverty, low-performing schools (Eyring, 2012). The President's Committee's Turnaround Arts Initiative was developed from the recommendations in the PCAH's recent report *Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future Through Creative Schools* (2011). Turnaround Arts will test the committee's hypothesis that high-quality and integrated arts education can be an effective and powerful tool for whole school reform in high-poverty, low-performing schools ("Turnaround: Arts," 2012). Research from the *Reinvesting in Arts Education* (2011) study found that students from high-poverty backgrounds who participate in the arts are more engaged and cooperative with teachers and peers, more self-confident, and better able to express their ideas. The report also found that students engaged in the arts develop habits of mind including problem solving and dealing with ambiguity and complexity, along with social competencies including social tolerance and self-confidence (*Reinvesting*, 16). Both these habits of mind and the social competencies directly

align to two of the emotional resources that Payne (2013) defines that students from high-poverty often lack. This report suggests that the high-arts engagement advantage provided to students from high-poverty backgrounds may be linked to the emotional resources they can acquire through art education. The website for the Turnaround Arts initiative also cites James Catterall's 2012 study as a follow-up study to the *Reinvesting in the Arts Education* study commissioned by the PCAH. The two-year Turnaround program is currently implemented in eight schools around the country, providing different benefits according to each school's customized strategic plan.

In this section I reviewed literature in art education field about working with students from high-poverty contexts. In the next section, I present research within the art education field dealing with the urban setting. Though urban is a term sometimes used to denote high-poverty city settings, the literature in the next section also explores other critiques of the urban landscape in art education.

## **2.2 Art Education in Urban Contexts**

Recently, the National Art Education Association and the Teachers College Press at Columbia University published *Transforming City Schools through Art: Approaches to Meaningful K-12 Learning*, a compilation edited by Hutzler, Bastos, and Cosier (2012). *Transforming City Schools through Art* is the first book within the art education field that focuses solely on the impact of the urban setting on the art education classroom, evidence of increased interest in the field on this teaching context. The editors focus on three main urban issues: seeing the city as an asset, teaching for social justice in urban settings, and creating a curriculum and teaching methodologies for city schools. As they state in the introduction, the Bastos, Cosier, and Hutzler (2012) "believe in the power of art to make the familiar strange and to expose the hidden structures of injustice working against children and teachers in urban schools"

(p. 2). Further, they propose that high quality urban education can be achieved by prioritizing art as a means to engage students through imagination in meaningful and relevant learning. Students should be empowered to be critical players in the transformation of their educational process.

### ***2.2.1 Models of success: Urban arts-based schools.***

As testament to the power of the arts in urban education, Bastos, Cosier, and Hutzel (2012) highlight several urban schools with an arts focus that have achieved remarkable success. Milwaukee has several arts-based schools including Elm Creative Arts Elementary School, Roosevelt and Lincoln Middle School of the Arts, and Milwaukee High School of the Arts. In Cincinnati, the School for the Creative and Performing Arts (SCPA) has offered an urban-arts focus since 1973. Another arts-based secondary school that has thrived is the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts. According to Speer, Kohn, and Mitchell (1990), academics are valued on par with arts at this high school to better prepare students for advanced study in arts specialties. Illustrative of this balanced approach, traditional core subjects are taught in the first five periods of the day. After lunch, three hours are reserved for the arts specialties. Also, the academic subject teachers at the school integrate art themes into their subject areas to enhance student engagement and their learning experiences. The authors note that many students enter the school with only a “C” grade average, yet the state test scores are exceptionally high.

During the two school years prior to the publication of the article, reading scores were in the top 10% and math scores in the top 25% statewide. Also, seniors at the school scored in the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile for their writing. Further, the school had an 80% of its graduates directly attend colleges or art institutes after graduation. Based on the information in the article, the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts is a model for urban arts-based school success. However, it is important to note here that although this school is highlighted as a premier urban arts-based school, the school does not represent the socioeconomic or racial make-up seen in

most urban high-poverty schools. The school serves an integrated student body with students from all socioeconomic backgrounds including a wide racial demographic which consisted of the following in 1990: 22% Hispanic, 12% Asian, 13% Black, 4% Filipino and Pacific Islanders and 1% Native American.

Another arts-based urban school cited as an example of success by Bastos, Cosier, and Hutzel (2012) is the Boston Arts Academy. Based on information from the school's website, the public school reflects the diversity of the seventeen Boston neighborhoods from which the students come, representing a racial demographic of 45% Black, 32% Hispanic, 16% White, 3% Asian, 3% Mixed Race and 1% Native American. In addition to this diverse racial make-up, over 60% of the school's student body comes from low-income households (Boston Arts Academy, 2013b, para. 3). Though this profile does not perfectly mirror the demographics in many urban high-poverty schools plagued by generational poverty, the Boston Arts Academy serves a higher-poverty population than the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts.

According to a case study of parent engagement at Boston Arts Academy by Ouimette, Feldman, and Tung (2006), the admissions process for the Boston Arts Academy is academic blind where students are not screened for prior academic achievement levels. Only their potential for and interest in the arts are considered as admissions criteria with approximately one in four applicants gaining admission. Similar to the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts, Boston Arts Academy provides a rigorous college preparatory academic curriculum alongside a full arts curriculum to prepare all students for a full range of choices after graduation. Despite the majority of the school population coming from low-income backgrounds, students from the Boston Arts Academy perform near the top of Boston high schools in English and mathematics,

and a high percentage of their graduates go directly to college: 94% in 2002 and 96% in 2003 (p. 94).

Given the success experienced by the Boston Arts Academy, the school has created the Center for Arts in Education to share their successful practices with school communities (Boston Arts Academy, 2013a). The faculty of the Center (2013) believes that “placing a high value on creativity and personalized learning translates into students who are invested in their own success” (par. 2). To share their practices, the Center invites educators to participate in school visits, summer institute professional development sessions and offers individual coaching and consulting services to foster transformative education based on student, school and community empowerment through artistic and academic innovation.

### ***2.2.2 Distinguished urban school art programming.***

While the two schools above demonstrate models of school-based arts reform in urban settings, Simpson (1995) identified two pockets of success in art education programs in traditional New York public schools. Both schools in Brooklyn had art education programs led by teachers committed to making a difference in their students’ lives through teaching practices that were reflective of their urban communities. Simpson (1995) reports that these teachers designed a curriculum that “teaches art through engaging their students in making visual statements about the real issues in their everyday world: issues like AIDS, violence in the streets, drugs, and the students' own identity crises” (p. 28). Students in these classes engaged with art and artists, both of their own and of other times and cultures, through discussing them, writing about them, and producing visual social-action statements. Art was taught as a positive form of expression and a source of social, artistic, and narrative empowerment for the students. Simpson (1995) identifies that the teachers in these two programs made conscientious choices about how the arts could best make a positive impact on their students’ lives. She noticed that since students



in these urban schools experience high rates of academic failure, the art teachers rewarded them for completion of each phase of a project to encourage participation and self-confidence in the process. Students in these two art education programs responded to simple recognition and reward by trying new things, striving to finish projects, and desiring to succeed in meeting project criteria. Though Simpson does not name the schools in which these exemplary programs are housed, it is clear that the art educators in both programs strategically teach their students through pedagogy appropriate for their urban school communities.

### ***2.2.3 Policy reform in urban art education.***

In her research, Simpson (1995) proposes that effective policies are the key to planning art curricula for nontraditional populations. Often, teachers walk in to find curriculum guides that are outdated and non-specific to the community population. She believes that to reach urban children and engage them in learning, teachers need different methods and strategies than those employed in teaching rural or suburban children. These different instructional methods do not need to limit the knowledge or skill objectives students are required to learn. Rather, they set high standards but differentiate to help these students succeed.

Another important policy change Simpson emphasizes is that art educators should be required to learn about the external influences on their curricula, mainly learning about the nature of the community in which they teach. Simpson believes that teacher training programs often do not emphasize taking the time to learn about the community in which one teaches. Fieldwork for teacher preparation could become more expansive to include gathering more information than merely teaching practices and students. It could be expanded to include becoming aware of the community problems, architecture, graffiti, social ills, ethnic neighborhoods and market-places, parks, and playgrounds so these settings can become the basis for planning art lessons. In emphasizing this knowledge of the community, art educators would

become equipped with knowledge of how to engage students through content that involves real-life and community-based content.

Simpson (1995) contends that most urban educational reform movements have little or nothing to do with art education, and that this failing is due to the lack of policy for training art educators to teach successfully in urban settings and to defend the value of art education for urban students. Traditional constructs of learning elements and principles of design are seldom activities that engage urban students in art. Those types of activities do not convince them to adopt art as an alternative, less violent way to express themselves, to understand human behavior in all cultures, or to develop critical thinking. Simpson (1995) aligns with Bastos, Cosier, and Hutzel's (2012) call for an alternate pedagogy for urban students in calling for school arts policy that addresses the importance of art education's role in urban education and its ability to implement programs connected to students lives that make positive and lasting impact.

#### **2.2.4 *Seeing the city as an asset.***

In *Transforming City Schools through Arts*, Bastos (2012) proposes a theoretical framework for advancing urban education that considers the city as an ideal site for learning about and with the arts. In supporting the need for a theoretical foundation for urban art education, Bastos first asserts that as pedagogy, urban art education needs systemization, refinement and refocusing that can be provided by a theoretical lens. Also, she identifies the same issue noted by Simpson (1995), that most texts focusing on urban education neglect the arts, as if art education bears no significance in the lives of urban students.

As discussed above, there seems to be a benefit and a need for more attention to teaching art in an urban high-poverty context. Catterall (2012) and the others cited in this chapter demonstrate the correlation between arts engagement and achievement, but they do not establish a direct causal relationship. Within the field of art education, there is a body of research

supportive of the idea that the visual arts encourage successful habits of mind and dispositions in students. Many of these habits of mind align to the same traits discussed in character education research, such as persistence, self-control and so on. The connections between the habits of mind and character education practices is discussed further in Chapter Four. I will also describe the process of creating guidelines for teaching students in urban high-poverty settings with special attention to how character education can play a role in the art classroom.

### **3 CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

I was initially drawn to research this topic because of my experience as a special educator in Atlanta Public Schools. In my classroom, I used character education practices routinely to build positive classroom culture and civic engagement in my students. My positive behavior reinforcement system involved incentives for demonstrating perseverance, independent thought, teamwork towards one another or towards our school community, and self-initiated problem-solving strategies. The transformation in my students' social and emotional skills over the past three years has been noted by visitors to the class and their families. Outside of the realm of art education, character education plays a large role in the educational reform movement, especially in high-poverty schools in urban settings. I am interested in ways to bring these character education practices into the art education curriculum as a means to encourage art education as an important aspect of the urban education reform movement.

#### **3.1 Procedure**

Character education is a field of educational research involving many different topics. For this study, I conducted a document analysis of research in character education referring to methods of integrating character education skills into classroom practice. Existing research on character education by scholars in diverse fields served as my primary data, which I analyzed for themes based on different character skills aspects (i.e. perseverance, curiosity, and grit). I identified character education programs that provide instruction in the areas of the emotional resources that Payne (2013) suggests that students from high-poverty backgrounds lack. These categories provided structure for grouping similar themes. These categories served as the heart of

the document analysis to produce guidelines for urban high-poverty art educators to use in their own classrooms. In addition, I made connections between how these identified character education skills align to the habits of mind that the visual arts have been suggested to develop.

Through this study, I sought to answer the following questions: 1) What character education practices employed in urban, high-poverty settings align to Payne's (2013) definition of emotional resources that students from high-poverty backgrounds lack? 2) What are the predominant character skills taught in these programs? 3) How do they relate to the habits of mind developed through the visual arts? and 4) What are guidelines for character education that can be integrated into urban high-poverty art education settings?

### **3.2 Data Collection**

To answer the first question, I reviewed current and previous research and programs which emphasize objectives to address character, moral, and/or social and emotional traits or skills to increase successful outcomes in children. Since most character education programs were not intended to be implemented solely within low-income urban settings, I included programs that address the skills that Payne (2013) suggests as the emotional resources that students from high-poverty backgrounds lack. Since the goal of this study is to develop a tool for art educators in urban high-poverty schools, programs used within schools with similar demographics were analyzed for categorical themes. In response to the second question about what character skills or traits are taught in the programs, I created categories based on character skills or traits that align to Payne's (2013) emotional resources. The character traits or skills selected in the broader sample of character education programs represent the skills and traits necessary for success, but they do not target the skills most vitally needed by students from high-poverty backgrounds to become successful. To address the third question, I reviewed Lois Hetland's (2013) eight "Habits

of Mind” to determine which habits align to the prioritized character skills identified in response to question two. This aspect of the study provided further depth as to why art education is an ideal forum for developing character skill in students from high-poverty backgrounds. The fourth and final question will be addressed by the creation of guidelines for urban high-poverty art educators that can be utilized in the classroom. These guidelines presented in Chapter Five serves as the culmination of the research conducted in response to all four research questions.

### **3.3 Analysis**

After using open coding to categorize information gathered in response to the first three questions, I created a chart of the character skills identified in order to create guidelines for skills which should be prioritized and suggestions of how they can be addressed within the art education context for students from high-poverty backgrounds. These guidelines consist of a character strength as the header for each section followed by strategies for implementation within an art education classroom (interactions, discipline, and so on) and suggestions for lesson themes and content to develop those skills. These guidelines provide a tool for urban high-poverty art educators to address the emotional resources that students from high-poverty backgrounds often do not have.

### **3.4 Limitations and Delimitations**

Conducting this study of character education programs provides tremendous insight into alternative methods of addressing the achievement inequities within our education system, especially avenues that include the arts. However, inherent in this study are several limitations which must be noted. The study is a document analysis of a limited number of programs, and although I attempted to include all character education resources in this analysis, it is inevitable

that some programs may not have been examined. Though this study attempted to be comprehensive in regards to character education programs used or meant to address low-income students' needs, it may not have been fully comprehensive due to the limitations of the nature of the document analysis sample.

Another limitation that must be acknowledged is that programs vary on the language used within their characterization of the skills or traits addressed. For example, one program may refer to perseverance while another discusses grit. Though these terms are not identical, the programs may refer to skills that manifest similarly in action. In these cases, I was limited by the research terminology in determining whether the skills should be categorized together or as separate categories of coding. In these instances, my decision was based on the program definition of the skills and how they appear when manifested in student performance.

It must also be acknowledged that the guidelines suggested for art educators has not been tested in an actual art education classroom. The product is informed by my experience as an educator in urban high-poverty visual arts and special education settings, but the suggestions in the guidelines remain an untested hypothesis of effective strategies based on the research in this study. Testing of the effectiveness of the proposed guidelines are beyond the scope of this study. I strongly believe that these guidelines add to the body of literature of art education to benefit students from urban high-poverty backgrounds.

## 4 CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I present answers to my first three research questions. I begin by investigating Payne's (2013) explanation of the emotional resources that students from high-poverty backgrounds lack and then present character education research that may address those needs that Payne identifies. The guidelines for character education that I believe can be integrated into urban high-poverty art education settings will be presented in the following chapter.

### 4.1 Emotional Resources of Students from High-Poverty Backgrounds

As discussed in the introduction, Payne (2013) defines poverty as “the extent to which an individual does without resources,” (p. 7) one of which is emotional resources. Payne defines emotional resources as being able to choose and control emotional responses, especially in regard to negative situations, without engaging in self-destructive behavior. Emotional resources are internal resources that manifest as stamina, perseverance, and choices. Payne states that emotional resources may well be the most important of all resources because they allow individuals to break patterns of habit which is necessary to leave poverty. She defines persistence, such as staying with a situation, as evidence that emotional resources are present. Further, Payne (2013) emphasizes that emotional resources come first from role models. These resources are collected over time through experience and stored in the brain as an “emotional memory bank,” (p. 9).

Emotional resources such as stamina allow students from high-poverty backgrounds to seek options and possibilities outside of one's previous emotional memory bank beyond what they know well. In *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, Payne (2013) asks “How do you



provide emotional resources when the individual has not had access to appropriate role models?” (p. 84). She suggests the following solutions: provide support systems; use appropriate discipline strategies and approaches; establish long-term relationships with adults who are appropriate; teach the hidden rules; identify options; increase individuals’ achievement through appropriate instruction; teach goal setting; and develop a future story (plan for the future). The visual arts curriculum can be used to develop self-control, stamina, and perseverance in students from high-poverty backgrounds. Before delving more deeply into how these character skills can be integrated into the art education classroom, I will provide a brief overview of how the character education field developed into its current manifestation.

#### **4.2 An Overview of the Development of Character Education**

The research of Nobel Prize winning University of Chicago economics professor James Heckman is often cited as the origins of the character education field (Tough, 2012). In the early 1990s, Heckman took on a study on the General Education Development (GED) program. This program was at the time becoming a popular alternative means to receive a high school equivalency certificate and was considered an alternative path to college for low-income and minority students who were more likely to drop out of high school. The GED program grew from the school of thought that a high school diploma certifies only one’s cognitive skill. Heckman wanted to examine whether these students with GEDs were just as well prepared for further academic pursuits as high school graduates. He found that by age twenty-two, only three percent of GED recipients were enrolled in a four-year university or had completed any sort of post-secondary degree, compared to 46 percent of high school graduates. Further, he found that when comparing different future outcomes including annual income, unemployment rate, divorce

rate, and use of illegal drugs, GED recipients looked very similar to high school dropouts, despite the fact that they were on average more cognitively intelligent than high school dropouts.

Heckman (2001 as cited in Tough, 2012) concluded that there were other psychological traits that allowed high school graduates to persist and graduate from high school. These traits which included an inclination to persist at a boring and often unrewarding task, the ability to delay gratification, and the tendency to follow through on a plan were also valuable in college, the workplace and in life generally. These traits are called noncognitive skills by economists, but educators often refer to them as character skills or strengths.

Since the beginning of public education in the United States, there has been discourse about moral education, virtues-based education and character development in our students. This discussion became more public in the 1980s when William Bennett served as Ronald Reagan's U.S. Secretary of Education from 1985 to 1988. Bennett (1993) was best known for editing an anthology titled *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* which was intended as a moral education text for children. It is divided into sections devoted to the following different virtues: self-discipline, compassion, responsibility, friendship, work, courage, perseverance, honesty, loyalty and faith. This anthology represented the moral education viewpoint of many neoconservatives of the time; a label that prompted progressives to shy away from the moral and virtue education terminology despite the fact that several of the virtues Bennett selected still remain in many character education programs (such as self-discipline and perseverance).

In 2004, psychologists Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman published the first work of research to identify and classify these positive psychological traits titled *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*. This book was intended to provide a theoretical framework to assist in developing practical applications for the traits identified as

good character (Tough, 2012). Peterson and Seligman (2004) developed twenty-four character strengths that they believed had the greatest practical benefit for people possessing and expressing those strengths. In other words, these twenty-four character strengths were identified as the traits that would most likely lead to success. These character strengths were considered entirely malleable skills that could be learned, practiced and taught.

Since the publication of Peterson and Seligman's *Character Strengths and Virtues*, there has been a steady increase in public interest in character education in schools. In 2010, the National Center for Educational Research (NCER) published *Efficacy of Schoolwide Programs to Promote Social and Character Development and Reduce Problem Behavior in Elementary School Children*. In this report by the Social and Character Development Research Consortium, researchers followed seven different character education programs: the University at Buffalo, State University of New York's *Academic and Behavioral Competencies Program*; the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's *Competence Support Program*; Vanderbilt University's *Love In a Big World* program; Oregon State University's *Positive Action* program; The Children's Institute *Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies* program; New York University's *The 4Rs Program (Reading, Writing, Respect, and Resolution)*; and the University of Maryland, College Park's *Second Step* program. The study involved at least five treatment schools and five control schools for each program over the course of three years.

Though the results of this study did not enthusiastically promote the benefit of character education programs, further research has been conducted since this evaluation to determine specifically which character skills should be targeted to encourage success in students. The programs evaluated in the 2010 NCER featured development of the following skills: social skills, behavior management, social problem solving, building peer networks, empathy, self-control,

self-efficacy, honesty, goal setting and impulse control. Though some of these program areas overlap with the twenty-four character strengths identified by Peterson and Seligman (2004), they focus mainly on building social skills and reducing behavior issues. When Peterson and Seligman were asked to pare down their list of twenty-four character strengths to those most practical to teach in the school environment, they created the following list of seven: grit, self-control, zest, social intelligence, gratitude, optimism, and curiosity (Tough, 2012).

Along with research from University of Pennsylvania psychologist Angela Duckworth, these seven character strengths are used by the KIPP: New York City charter school network as the foundation of their character education program. I mention the KIPP: New York City schools because these schools serve predominantly students from high-poverty backgrounds. The network of ten schools has an impressive track record of both high school and college completion rates. Ninety-four percent of their students graduate from high school which is nearly two times the rate of similar income minority students in New York City. Also, 86% of KIPP: New York City students have matriculated to college which is nearly two times the rate of low-income students nationally, and 41% have earned a bachelor's degree compared to ten percent of students from high-poverty backgrounds nationally. Clearly something they are doing in these ten schools is making a significant difference for these students. As I have mentioned previously, KIPP: New York City schools serve as a useful comparison model, because the schools predominantly serve students from urban high-poverty backgrounds.

In the next section, I will look at character education programs that specifically teach skills aligned to those areas of emotional resources that Payne (2013) suggests that students from high-poverty backgrounds often lack. I will refer to them as character strengths, following the same language of Peterson and Seligman (2004), suggesting that these characters strengths are

not innate and unchanging, but rather entirely malleable skills that can be learned. Of the seven identified by Peterson, Seligman and Duckworth (Tough, 2012) as the most pertinent for students, the following four align most closely with Payne's (2013) definition of emotional resources: grit, self-control, optimism and social intelligence.

### **4.3 Grit**

In Payne's (2013) definition of poverty, she describes one aspect of emotional resources as a "level of persistence and an ability to stay with the situation until it can be learned...This persistence (i.e. staying with the situation) is evidence that emotional resources are present," (p. 9). Payne notes that to move from poverty to middle class, an individual must suspend his/her emotional memory bank because the situations and hidden rules are so unlike what he/she has experienced previously. The ability to withstand uncomfortable situations is perseverance, sometimes defined as grit.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) define persistence in similar terms. They assert that persistence is "voluntary continuation of a goal-directed action in spite of obstacles, difficulties, or discouragement," (p. 229). Duckworth (2013) defines grit as "the tendency to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals," (<https://sites.sas.upenn.edu/duckworth> Research Statement, par. 1). In yet another variation, KIPP defines grit as: "Students finish what they start, completing tasks despite obstacles. They show a combination of persistence and resilience. They try very hard even after experiencing failure and work independently with focus," (<http://www.kippnyc.org/kipp-character/>, par. 2). Though these definitions vary slightly in their interpretation of grit, the character strength denotes the same ability to persist which Payne (2013) describes as a vital emotional resource necessary to move from poverty to middle class.

#### **4.3.1 *Grit research by Angela Duckworth.***

In 2014, you cannot discuss grit without considering the work of the Duckworth Lab at the University of Pennsylvania. Angela Duckworth was named a MacArthur Fellow in 2013 for her work on the educational implications of developing character strength in grit and self-control. She is also well-known for her popular TED talk “The Key to Success? Grit.” In her research statement, Duckworth (2013) states that her research examines two traits that predict success in life: grit and self-control (which will be discussed in the next section). In a recent article in the Observer, Duckworth (2013) notes that her lab is frequently being asked by parents and teachers how grit can intentionally be cultivated in students. In order to create guidelines for art educators that integrates these character education practices, successful strategies to cultivate these four character strengths are key.

Duckworth (2013) states that research on the psychological antecedents of grit is just beginning to be explored and that their lab hopes someday to be able to generate concrete recommendations and interventions for parents and educators looking to foster grit. Currently, her lab has found a connection between grit and optimistic explanatory style. In a study of novice teachers in the classroom, they found that more optimistic teachers who tended to attribute good events to global and stable causes and bad events to temporary and specific causes rated themselves higher in both grit and life satisfaction. Optimistic explanatory style means attributing the cause of events to a source outside of oneself when appropriate. In turn, grit and self-satisfaction predicted teacher effectiveness assessed at the end of the school year. Though Duckworth’s (2013) research does not directly correlate to the cultivation of grit in students, it does link grit and the growth mindset. Growth mindset is defined by the thought that intelligence is malleable rather than fixed.

In an article in the Observer, Duckworth (2013) suggested that teaching in the optimistic explanatory style that fosters growth mindset in students may be a promising strategy for nurturing grit in students. She cites unpublished cross-sectional studies of school-age children in which she has found moderate, positive associations between grit and growth mindset, suggesting that growth mindset may contribute to the tendency to sustain effort toward and commitment to goals. She also cites a study by Carol Dweck (2007) at Stanford University that has found correlational and experimental evidence demonstrating that a growth mindset encourages children to construe failures and setbacks as opportunities to learn and improve, rather than as evidence that they are permanently lacking in ability. Duckworth (2013) suggests that this research is promising in developing a framework for directly building grittier students.

Though Duckworth (2013) states that research is only beginning to explore how to develop grit in students, many different character education programs offer suggestions. One such program is run by the nonprofit organization Youth Mentoring Partnership (YMP) in Philadelphia. The five core elements of the YMP program are mentoring, intense physical fitness, focused goal-setting and achievement, earned recognition, and positivity. Of these elements, the last three would seem to translate well into the art classroom. One program by the YMP is the Friend Fitness program which matches volunteer mentors with local teenagers. In this program students are challenged by weekly workouts with the objective of each exercise being to create a “moment of choice” where the student has the choice to give up or persevere. The goal is to teach students that with pushing through challenges, giving 100% effort and bouncing back from setbacks and failures are the keys to success.

Major (2013) completed a research review of the Friend Fitness program and its ability to develop grit and positive youth development. Major’s preliminary findings in this study indicate

that participants experienced an overall increase in grit and that this character trait was related to positive youth development. This program works with a mix of students in grades six to twelve from various socioeconomic groups. In the results, he notes that the pre- and mid-assessment grit scores did not demonstrate conventional benchmarks for statistical significance ( $p \leq .05$ ), but the trend indicated a positive direction and that a larger sample size might reach traditional measure of significance. Major notes that these are preliminary findings, but there seems to be a positive impact on developing grit from the Friend Fitness program.

#### ***4.3.2 Promoting grit, tenacity, and perseverance report.***

In February 2013, the United States Department of Education released a draft report titled *Promoting Grit, Tenacity, and Perseverance: Critical Factors for Success in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. In Chapter Four of the report, the authors examine approximately 50 programs to determine how learning environments can be designed to promote grit, tenacity and perseverance. For the purpose of identifying strategies that can be integrated into an urban art education program, I will only review the following program subcategories in the report: classroom curricula/teacher professional development, mindset interventions, and learning strategies and interventions.

One of the learning strategy interventions is to engage students in clarifying goals and anticipating potential obstacles and solutions. Grit is persevering despite challenges, so the ability to proactively plan for and address obstacles builds students' ability to show grit. Mental contrasting/implementation intentions (MCII) is an example of one of these strategies (as cited Duckworth and colleagues, 2011). Mental contrasting refers to contrasting the idea of a desired future with possible obstacles. Once obstacles are identified, students can create plans to overcome those obstacles. In the art classroom, this could be taught when working on difficult or daunting projects as part of the pre-planning phase. Students could envision their desired project outcome, and then identify possible obstacles in meeting that end. By explicitly teaching that the



MCII process could be generalized to goals outside of the art classroom, students could learn to use mental contrasting in other contexts, as well.

Another program highlighted in the U.S. Department of Education (2013) report is the Penn Resiliency Program. This program is a group intervention for late elementary and middle school students that teaches cognitive-behavioral and social problem-solving skills. Students learn to detect inaccurate thoughts, to evaluate the accuracy of those thoughts, and to challenge negative beliefs by considering alternative interpretations. The program teaches a variety of skills and strategies for students to use when dealing with difficult situation and emotions. These skills are integral in developing both grit and optimism. Initially the skills are introduced through skits, role plays, short stories or cartoons that illustrate the key points. After students have an understanding of the concept, they practice with hypothetical examples that demonstrate how the skill is relevant to real-world situations that they might face. This could be integrated into art lessons in which students explore negative stereotypes they have encountered or in which students create visual culture advertisements or posters about how to remain resilient despite challenges. The Penn Resiliency Program consists of twelve lessons in total and covers mindset strategies and culminates with social problem solving skills. The program is a resiliency program, but it ultimately includes aspects that develop all four of the character strengths reviewed in this chapter.

#### **4.4 Self-Control**

The next character strength to review that aligns to the needs Payne (2013) identifies for students from high-poverty backgrounds is self-control. Peterson and Seligman (2004) speak of self-control as self-regulation. They define self-regulation as “how a person exerts control over his or her own responses so as to pursue goals and live up to standard,” (p. 500). The responses

Peterson and Seligman refer to include thoughts, emotions, impulses, performances, and other behaviors. The standards they refer to are ideals, moral injunctions, norms, performance targets, and the expectations of other people. At KIPP, they break self-control into two different domains: school work and interpersonal. School work self-control manifests as coming to class prepared, remembering and following directions, getting to work right away rather than waiting until the last minute, paying attention and resisting distractions. Interpersonal self-control is remaining calm even when criticized or provoked, allowing others to speak without interrupting them, being polite to adults and peers, and keeping your temper in check. This definition aligns so closely to Payne's (2013) definition of emotional resources as a whole: resources that allow you not to engage in destructive behaviors. The behaviors identified in the definition of self-control are often not the easy choice, but rather the decision that leads to success.

The school work self-control skills align to what Payne (2013) calls the direct-teaching of classroom survival skills. When students have not had models or examples of behaviors that lead to success in school, these skills need to be taught explicitly. The interpersonal self-control that KIPP describes is similar to what Payne (2013) calls reframing. Reframing is a technique used to identify the behavior that will be compatible with the identity you want. For instance, if a student is prone to physically fight, he or she likely does so to exert physical strength and dominance. This student would need to reframe the situation by deciding that remaining calm and deciding not to fight actually takes more strength than physically fighting. To reframe requires interpersonal self-control.

The United States Department of Education draft report (2013) identifies several different school readiness programs that develop executive functions such as self-regulation. Self-regulation is ultimately another term for self-control and covers both the school work and

interpersonal definitions above. One research-based early childhood program is *Tools of the Mind*. This program builds strong foundations for school success by promoting intentional and self-regulated learning in preschool- and kindergarten-aged children. The program philosophy is inspired by the work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky and his students, and is also rooted in current neuropsychological research. Though this program is only implemented with early childhood populations of students, the strategies seem to be applicable in any setting. One strategy the curriculum uses to increase children's learning of cognitive and social-emotional self-regulation is to embed these lessons into various content activities. The program also emphasizes playful learning and situated-learning to teach understanding of self-regulation in context. Another important strategy the program employs is explicit instruction. *Tools of the Mind* defines explicit instruction as deliberate teaching designed to focus students' attention on a specific competency or goal. In the case of self-control, this would involve providing information, modeling and providing guided practice. Payne (2013) suggests that a lack of role models is one of the greatest resources that students from high-poverty backgrounds do without. Modeling self-control and these other character strengths is an integral strategy for high-poverty educators integrate into their teaching practice. With appropriate support, these strategies could be implemented in an art education classroom.

Another program reviewed in the United States Department of Education draft report (2013) is PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies). This is a teacher professional development program to train teachers to build children's competencies in self-control, emotion regulation and interpersonal skills. This program applies to building interpersonal self-control and also social intelligence. The curriculum is intended for elementary age children and includes developmentally-based lessons, materials and instructions to facilitate the sessions. The PATHS

website does not provide any specific implementation strategies, as they would like educators to purchase the program before previewing the strategies. In a review of the PATHS program on the Blueprints website, one of the strategies suggested in the description of the program is to facilitate the dynamic relationship between cognitive-affective understanding and real-life situations. This essentially means to promote generalization and support ongoing behavior by teaching the skills explicitly in context. The strategy of explicit instruction has been suggested by several different programs and applies when developing any of these four character strengths.

#### **4.5 Optimism**

The third character strength is optimism. To begin with Peterson and Seligman (2004), they group optimism with hope, future-mindedness and future orientation. Peterson and Seligman (2004) believe optimism “represents a cognitive, emotional, and motivational stance toward the future, thinking about the future, expecting that desired events and outcomes will occur, acting in ways believed to make them more likely, and feeling confident that these will ensue given appropriate efforts sustain good cheer in the here and now and galvanize goal-directed actions,” (p. 570). KIPP defines optimism as believing that effort will improve your future, if you reflect on setbacks to determine how to do better next time, stay motivated even when things do not go well, and believe that you can improve on things you are not good at. Payne (2013) asserts that creating a “future story” is a strategy that helps students gain emotional resources to persevere and withstand trials (p. 138). A “future story” is a plan for the future that includes a long-term goal and a plan for what needs to be done to accomplish that goal. In creating this plan, students must remain optimistic in knowing that they have agency to improve themselves and keep the end goal in mind.

#### **4.5.1 Mindset interventions.**

The U.S. Department of Education (2013) draft report asserts that there have been significant academic and psychological impacts made from short-term mindset interventions that affirm who students are and want to be, mitigate threats to self-esteem and importantly teach students that ability grows with effort. The last aspect relates directly to the character strength of optimism. Students need to believe that these character strengths and their intelligence are malleable in order to feel that they have the agency to change their lot in life. Another important mindset that is taught through the programs reviewed is monitoring progress and changing course when necessary. Again, this directly applies to the character strength of optimism in that resilience is needed to persist despite challenges.

One of the first mindsets interventions reviewed in the U.S. Department of Education report (2013) is teaching students the “growth mindset.” These interventions address the mindset that ability and competence grow with effort. Though this applies most directly to the character strength of optimism, there is some overlap with the character strength grit as it has been found that students are more likely to persist through academic challenges when they believe that effort will make them smarter and lead to success. Psychologist Carol Dweck (2006) researches the “growth mindset” extensively and has found that the definition of failure changes when students operate with the “growth mindset.” These students view their failures as moments of unfulfilled potential where they did not grow. In an experiment, Dweck gave four-year-olds a choice to either redo an easy jigsaw puzzle or try a harder one. Children with the “growth mindset” chose one hard one after another. For students with the growth mindset, success is about stretching themselves and becoming smarter.

In a report release by the Stupski Foundation (Snipes et al., 2012), Snipes and his colleagues reviewed four different interventions that address the “growth mindset.” Three of the

interventions targeted middle school students and showed positive impacts on student achievement. The strategy implemented in all three of these programs was to teach explicitly that intelligence is malleable and that the brain can grow like a muscle with effort. In the art classroom, this can be taught directly in regards to intelligence as a whole, or can more specifically be addressed in teaching that visual art skills are also malleable and increase with effort. Many students encounter interactions with visual arts materials that are discouraging and lead to feeling of inadequacy. This negative mindset can be countered by explicitly teaching the “growth mindset” as it applies in the art classroom and then generalizing the skills for how it can further be applied beyond the art class environment.

Another mindset intervention addressed in the U.S. Department of Education (2013) draft report is shifting students’ explanation for academic and social challenges from personal failure to temporary external factors. This mindset intervention aligns directly to what Peterson, Seligman and KIPP all consider an important part of the character strength of optimism. The cycle of self-blame and doubt that students from high-poverty backgrounds often experience undermines their ability to persist in the face of the many challenges they encounter daily. Learning to attribute challenge to external factors rather than personal failure shifts students’ mindsets, so they believe that success is achievable and that challenge is an inevitable part of success.

One of the interventions reviewed in the U.S. Department of Education (2013) report was for minority students to make speeches that would be delivered to future college freshman to instill in them the notion that challenges may be attributable not to personal failure but a common experience that minorities often feel like they do not belong in the academic community (as cited in Walton & Cohen, 2007). In the art education classroom, this could be envisioned as a

visual culture project exploring how to communicate this message. Another mindset intervention in the report showed that students' persistence was greater in the face of critical feedback when the feedback was delivered with a message that the student was being held to high standards (as cited in Cohen, Steele, & Ross, 1999). Again, in the art classroom, this could be integrated into art criticism or feedback sessions on student artwork. Through this process, students would learn to accept feedback as a catalyst for growth, rather than attributing criticism to personal failures.

Yet another mindset intervention reviewed in the U.S. Department of Education (2013) report is the affirmation of personal values. Specifically with students from high-poverty backgrounds, stress from being threatened by stereotypes creates pressure and anxiety regarding self-esteem. One intervention reviewed focused on developing an optimistic mindset by having middle school students spend fifteen minutes writing about a value that was important to them, such as a hobby or relationships with friends. The report suggests that this intervention was successful by mitigating the distracting anxiety of stereotype threat through affirmation of the students as individuals with strong values (as cited in Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Master, 2006). In the art classroom, developing a sense students' self-worth and value could be integrated into many different projects. In the study above, students who participated in the values-based essays earned increased grade point averages compared to the control students.

#### ***4.5.2 Language of optimism.***

Another strategy in the U.S. Department of Education (2013) report comes from the Student Success Skills (SSS) program. One of the five categories of strategies and skills the program teaches is "Building Healthy Optimism." The SSS program is used in more than 9,000 school counselors and teachers across the U.S. and has been reviewed and found effective in six different studies. Optimism building strategies is a key component of this program. The program overview suggests looking for the smallest improvements and keeping in mind the notion of

continuous improvement, setting goals and sharing success weekly, and using the language of optimism. They suggest teaching students that if what you are doing is not working, try something different rather than doubting your ability. Again, this refers back to not internalizing failures, but rather acknowledging them as the result of temporary external factors.

#### **4.6 Social intelligence**

The last character strength that I will discuss at length is social intelligence. Peterson and Seligman (2004) believe that like spatial, verbal and perceptual intelligences, there is also a group of “hot intelligences, so called because they process ‘hot’ information: signals concerning motives, feelings, and other domains of direct relevance to an individual’s well-being and/or survival,” (p. 338). These hot intelligences include personal, social, and emotional intelligence. Social intelligence specifically is defined as being able to accurately assess one’s own motives, using social information to get others to cooperate, identifying social dominance and sociopolitical relationships among individuals and groups, and acting wisely in relationships. Again, looking at the KIPP definition, social intelligence is defined as being able to find solutions during conflicts with others, showing that you care about the feelings of others and adapting to different social situations. The definition formed by David Levin at KIPP echoes Peterson, Seligman and Duckworth, because he worked with them to determine how these character strengths could best be integrated into the classroom.

Payne (2013) states that emotional resources are linked to appropriate boundaries which signify “the ability to say ‘no’ to being ‘used,’” (p. 85). She argues that the closer you get to survival, the fewer the boundaries since space is crowded and resources are scarce. This lack of boundaries often leads to abuse, manipulation, co-dependence and servitude. The response to being without adequate boundaries is often to overcompensate and become over-controlling,



manipulative and fixated. Options are seldom considered and thinking becomes polarized. Payne (2013) believes that starting the discussion in the classroom to identify physical boundaries is the first step to creating emotional boundaries. She suggests discussing what space in the room is students' space, how you appropriately keep someone out of your space, and how you stay in your own space. Building emotional boundaries is absolutely necessary for students to reach a successful level of social intelligence in adapting to different social situations and showing empathy for others feelings.

One of the most important aspects of social intelligence is adapting to different social situations. Payne (2013) describes this as how the hidden rules among socioeconomic classes impacts relationships with people who are different. She defines hidden rules as “the unspoken cues and habits of a group,” (p. 43). Payne argues that hidden rules are developed by one's situated-living environment and are learned by both being in the environment and being directly taught. Most important to note is that hidden rules impact relationships. One of the key issues in making the transition from poverty to middle class is to develop social capital by developing relationships with others different from you. If hidden rules are broken and offense is taken, these relationships do not form. Payne believes that not understanding the hidden rules of the next class often holds individuals back from moving upward in a career or even getting a position in the first place. She suggests that schools should explicitly teach the hidden rules of middle class as an alternative set of rules that can be used if they choose in certain situations. It is important not to denigrate students and their families' cultures and belief systems, but present these hidden rules as a way to access middle-class thinking.

Referring back to the *Tools of Mind* program for developing executive functioning and self-regulation in early childhood students, another instructional strategy is cooperative paired

learning. It is well known in education that social interactions are an important aspect of authentic learning, but this can also be leveraged to help students from high-poverty backgrounds develop social intelligence. The *Tools of Mind* program advocates for designing cooperative activities that in the beginning take a team or pair to complete the task, but with practice can be completed independently. Checking one's performance against others allows students to become able to monitor their own actions. Students should be assigned different roles in the activity, so each student has a responsibility. Through this instructional strategy, students are required to navigate social interactions and work with peers for a common goal.

Yet another program reviewed in the United States Department of Education (2013) draft report is the Chicago School Readiness Project, a federally-funded randomized control-trial intervention led by New York University professor Cybele Raver with low-income, preschool-aged children in Chicago Head Start programs. The aim of this early intervention program is to develop student's emotional and behavioral adjustment skills. Though no direct strategies are provided by the program website and other related sources, this program does directly address the social intelligence character strength of finding solutions for social conflicts, expressing emotions and adapting to various social situations.

Though this document analysis attempted to cover the majority of character education programs currently employed that may address the emotional resources Payne (2013) has cited that students living in poverty often do without, it is inevitable that some programs may not have been included. Before moving forward, I would like to propose my own definitions for the four character strengths discussed:

*Grit*: choosing to persist and sustain effort towards a goal.

*Self-Control*: exerting control over your responses in school and relationships.

*Optimism*: believing that effort will improve your future.

*Social Intelligence*: understanding your own emotions, finding solutions to conflict with others, and navigating different social situations.

In the discussion in the next chapter, I will present connections between the four character strengths identified and Lois Hetland's (2013) explanation of the habits of mind that the visual arts can foster in students. From there, I will refer to the character education programs reviewed in Chapter Four to present guidelines for art educators that can be applied in visual arts classrooms for students from urban high-poverty backgrounds to address their specific needs.

## 5 CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I review the connections between the character strength strategies discussed in the previous chapter and the benefits of visual arts education proposed by Lois Hetland (2013) in her work *Studio Thinking 2*. Though there are other sources within the art education framework that also discuss social-emotional development fostered through art education, such as *Spark of Genius: The thirteen thinking tools of the worlds most creative people*, by Robert and Michele Root-Bernstein (2001) and *Art for Life: Authentic instruction in art*, by Tom Anderson and Melody Milbrandt (2004), I chose to focus specifically on *Studio Thinking 2*. In her framework, Hetland (2013) provides deliberate strategies that art educators should employ to develop specific traits in students. I focused my conclusions on Hetland's framework because of the strategies she presents and the similarities in language between her research and that used within the character education field. Following this overview of several of the strategies from *Studio Thinking 2*, I will present guidelines for strategies and suggestions for integrating Hetland's strategies with character strengths education practices into a visual arts classroom to support the growth of students from urban high-poverty backgrounds.

### 5.1 Studio Habits of Mind

In 2003, the Alameda County Office of Education in California made a commitment to bring more arts into the eighteen school districts in the county through a partnership which piloted the newly created, unpublished Studio Thinking Framework (Hetland 2013).<sup>1</sup> This framework seemed to deepen student engagement with visual arts and served as the starting point

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<sup>1</sup> The partnership was funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the J. Paul Getty Trust, and the Ahmanson Foundation, with researchers from Project Zero at Harvard Graduate School of Education, faculty from the Center for Art and Public Life at the California College of the Arts, and teachers and administrators in public schools in Oakland, Berkeley, and Emery school districts.

for discovering powerful intersections between the visual arts and other subjects through arts integration. A second edition of *Studio Thinking* emerged in 2013 with Part One focused on how teachers plan and carry out instruction (Studio Structures) and Part Two dedicated to what is taught in visual arts classes (Studio Habits of Mind). The latter will be the focus of my investigation into Hetland's (2013) research.

Studio habits are considered by Hetland (2013) as dispositions that include not only skills but also the inclination to use these skills and alertness to opportunities to deploy particular skills. Also, it must be noted that three of the five teachers whose classroom practices formed the basis of the original research for *Studio Thinking* were urban high-poverty art educators from Boston Arts Academy, a school which was previously discussed in the literature review.

## **5.2 Stretch and Explore**

Hetland (2013) asserts that one of the benefits of the visual arts is the ability to Stretch and Explore, defined as "learning to reach beyond one's capacities, to explore playfully without a preconceived plan, and to embrace the opportunity to learn from mistakes and accidents," (p. 6). This studio habit of mind echoes the discussion of the growth mindset and the character strength of optimism. At the same time, Stretching and Exploring is a divergent and creative process about pushing new ideas to their boundaries. Artists play, take risks, explore novel associations and inevitably make mistakes during the process of creating art. Problem-solving is at the core of creativity. Conditional thinking is used to determine what effect different actions might take on the art product. Hetland (2013) notes that Stretch and Explore is less dependent on skill, but more a matter of attitude. It takes seeing errors as creative opportunities. This parallels the character strengths of optimism and grit in persisting through failures.

Hetland (2013) suggests that teachers can help students develop the inclination to Stretch and Explore by encouraging them in conversations such as: “See what would happen if...” “How else could you have done this?” or “Don’t worry about mistakes, just be brave...” (p. 96). This encourages students to be willing to embrace mistakes and failures as steps along the path of innovation. Giving open-ended assignments with adequate time and structures to pursue conditional thinking allows teaches students to Stretch and Explore, to play around, to take risks, to discover what can happen and to try alternatives. The habits students learn while stretching and exploring in the visual arts classroom develops character strength, as well.

### **5.3 Reflect**

The next studio habit of mind that Hetland (2013) discusses in *Studio Thinking* is Reflect. This habit has two parts: Question and Explain which is “learning to think and talk with others about an aspect of one’s work or working process,” and Evaluate which is “learning to judge one’s own work and working process, and the work of others in relation to standards of the field,” (p. 6). Both of these directly connect to the character strength of social intelligence and self-control with interpersonal awareness.

Students learn about themselves and their reactions and judgments as they evaluate their own and others artwork. In the art classroom, Questioning and Explaining can be used as teachers help students focus on a particular aspect of their work and Reflect on what they are making and how they are working. As the two subparts of the Reflect disposition, Hetland (2013) proposes that Question and Explain develops metacognition of one’s working process and that Evaluate develops the ability to make interpretive claims and judgments about works of art and to justify these claims using evidence. To be able to engage in the discourse required in the studio habit of Reflect, students from urban high-poverty schools need to be taught the

interpersonal skills and social intelligence to be successful in these types of peer interactions. Though Hetland (2013) does not explicitly state that the arts develop interpersonal awareness, employment of the habits of reflection would seemingly teach those skills in students who lack that character strength.

Hetland (2013) suggests that teachers can encourage students to reflect, question, explain and evaluate by regularly asking them to step back and focus on some aspect of their work or working process. This kind of metacognitive talk can occur much more frequently in the art class than in other content areas. Teachers can also ask students to keep notes in their sketchbooks, write blogs about their changing processes, set regular reflective assignments and holding mid-process critiques. Students learn how to critique their own work and the work of others with appropriate interpersonal skills. Also, as students Reflect, they learn to be more self-critical and to think about how they can improve, again fostering a growth mindset that their ability will improve with effort.

#### **5.4 Engage and Persist**

The next studio habit of mind is Engage and Persist, defined as “learning to embrace problems of relevance within the art world and/or of personal importance, to develop focus and other mental states conducive to working and persevering at art tasks,” (Hetland, 2013, p. 6). This definition parallels the discussion of the character strength of grit. Hetland asserts that in rigorous visual arts classes, teachers push their students to stick to projects and not to give up. Similar to the character strength of grit, the studio habit of Engaging and Persisting promotes that the only rule in art is to continue working because work will lead to something. Hetland (2013) agrees that effort, not raw talent, equals success. In this chapter, Hetland says that engagement is intrinsic motivation to persist. Intrinsic motivation is so important for students, because this type

of motivation will impact life beyond school successes. This must come from personal engagement in the visual arts classroom.

Hetland (2013) proposes that Engage and Persist is more than just working hard. It is about developing a habit of figuring out how to start and working in meaningful ways. Engagement occurs when students have a sense of self-awareness in being able to identify personal interests and when students can work through obstacles. In the art classroom, this looks like “taking a break, asking for someone to comment on one’s work, standing back and looking at one’s work from a new angle, or working on something else for a while,” (p. 58). Hetland (2013) even cites Carol Dweck’s work on mindsets in stating that the inclination to persist depends on self-efficacy, believing that you can get better. Though not cited, this refers back to Albert Bandura’s (1982) theories of the effect of the self-efficacy on behavior. When students believe their intelligence and art ability can be improved through effort, they work harder.

To assist students in learning to Engage and Persist, Hetland (2013) suggests that teachers set up projects that include choice, ask students to think about the activities they engage with during their free time, and ask students to keep personal sketchbooks to gather ideas and images. Sometimes teachers need to encourage and praise efforts at persistence and at other times teachers need to create tension by urging students to keep going. One of the most important strategies suggested is for teachers to nurture students’ self-efficacy by reminding them to be alert to excessive self-criticism and encouraging them to not give in to negative self-talk.

## **5.5 Envision and Observe**

Two other studio habits of mind are Envision and Observe. Hetland (2013) proposes that these two habits are essentially ends of the same continuum. Envisioning is imagining and generating images of possibilities in the mind, while Observing is looking closely at the outside



world. To encourage students to Envision, Hetland (2013) suggests asking them to generate works solely from their imaginations, having students imagine how an artwork would look if they made specific changes, and asking students to imagine all the ways they can vary a line, shape or color in a composition. Teachers can also encourage Envisioning by asking students to make a certain number of thumbnail sketches before proceeding with a project or encouraging students to storyboard projects before beginning. With Envisioning, students need to be aware of moments when reflection and re-imagination are necessary. This Envisioning process is what keeps students' art from becoming mundane and leads to innovation.

In art education, students are asked to Observe and look more closely than people ordinarily do and encouraged to “learn to see with new eyes,” (Hetland, 2013, p. 73). Students Observe models from which they are working, their own artworks as they create them, demonstrations by the teacher, artworks created by other students and artworks by professional artists. Teachers can encourage Observation by asking students to slow down and really look their work and by pointing out nuances in color, line and texture. While Observing, students are developing skills of really looking, beyond what they think they should see to what is really there. This habit of mind creates an alertness in students that allows them the perspective to stand back and Observe other issues, as well.

## **5.6 Express**

The last studio habit of mind we will discuss is Express. Hetland (2013) begins this chapter by pointing out that Expression in art does not solely refer to unfettered emotional expression, but rather is really about meaning of all sorts including feelings, concepts and ideas. Teachers can help students learn to Express by viewing and discussing examples of artists' work and videos. Thinking about how artists create meaning helps students understand how to create

meaning in their own works. Identifying themes for projects helps students to keep meaning at the forefront of their minds as they engage in art-making. Encouraging meaning and Expression in artworks helps student move beyond just high-quality craft.

### **5.7 Connection to Character Strengths**

Through the studio habits of mind, Hetland (2013) explains how art education fosters the development of particular dispositions in students. The following table (Table 5.1) addresses the overlap between the four character strengths discussed and the studio habits of mind discussed in this chapter. From these intersections between the character strength strategies and studio habits of mind, I created suggested activities for urban high-poverty art educators to employ in their classrooms (Table 5.2). Hopefully, by implementing the following suggestions in urban high-poverty settings, art educators will be equipped with tools to help students further develop their emotional resources (Payne, 2013).

**Table 5.1 Character Strengths Guidelines for Urban High-Poverty Art Educators**

<b>Strategies Suggested</b>	+	<b>Studio Habits of Mind</b>	=	<b>Art Classroom Practice</b>
<b><i>GRIT: Choosing to persist and sustain effort towards a goal.</i></b>				
Teach students to withstand uncomfortable situations.	+	<b>Engage and Persist</b> (embrace problems to develop focus to persevere at art tasks)	=	Design projects that require engagement with unknowns.
Provide “moments of choice” where students have the choice to give up or persevere.	+		=	Design projects that push students outside of their comfort zone.
Teach students to finish projects despite obstacles.	+		=	Design projects that have built in obstacles.
Teach/model the optimistic explanatory style.	+	<b>Reflect: Evaluate</b> (learning to judge one’s work and working process in relation to standards of the field)	=	Model for students that challenges are often related to temporary and specific causes, not personal failures.
Provide opportunities for earned recognition.	+		=	Provide incentive systems that are based in effort, not raw artistic talent.
Provide opportunities for goal-setting.	+		=	Present assessment criteria before beginning projects and allow students to set performance goals.
Teach students to anticipate potential obstacles and solutions (mental contrasting).	+	<b>Envision</b> (learning to picture mentally what cannot be directly observed and imagine possible next steps in making a piece)	=	Provide pre-planning time for envisioning desired project outcome and identifying possible obstacles.
<b>Strategies Suggested</b>	+	<b>Studio Habits of Mind</b>	=	<b>Art Classroom Practice</b>
<b><i>SELF-CONTROL: Exerting control over your responses in school and relationships.</i></b>				
Teach students to detect inaccurate thoughts and challenge negative beliefs by considering alternative interpretations	+	<b>Reflect: Evaluate</b> (learning to judge one’s work and working process in relation to standards of the field)	=	Design projects that explore negative stereotypes students have encountered and create visual culture advertisements about how to remain resilient.

Teach students the reframing technique to identify behaviors compatible with the identity he/she wants	+	<b>Reflect: Evaluate</b> (learning to judge one's work and working process in relation to standards of the field)	=	Design projects that explore the multiple ways to communicate one message (for example, strength without fighting).
Teach students to allow others to speak without interrupting them	+	<b>Reflect: Question and Explain</b> (learning to think and talk with others about an aspect of one's work or working process)	=	Provide opportunities for group discussions of artworks.
Teach students to remain calm even when criticized or provoked	+		=	Provide opportunities for criticism and feedback of student artwork from peers.
Direct-teach classroom survival skills	+	<b>Observe</b> (learning to see things that otherwise might not be seen)	=	Plan project timelines so students have to get to work right away rather than waiting until the last minute and teach students to pay attention and resist distractions.
<b>Strategies Suggested</b>	+	<b>Studio Habits of Mind</b>	=	<b>Art Classroom Practice</b>
<b><i>OPTIMISM: Believing that effort will improve your future.</i></b>				
Teach students that failure and setbacks are opportunities to learn and improve.	+	<b>Stretch and Explore</b> (embrace opportunities to learn from mistakes)	=	Design projects that have built in obstacles.
Teach students to shift their explanations for challenges from personal failures to temporary external factors.	+		=	During art criticism and feedback sessions, ensure feedback is received as a catalyst for change rather than attributed to personal failures.
Teach students to reflect on setbacks to determine how to do better next time.	+		=	Design series projects that require reflection before the next step.
Provide opportunities to share successes by using the language of optimism.	+	<b>Reflect: Evaluate</b> (learning to judge one's work and working process in relation to standards of the field)	=	Provide opportunity for exhibition of self-selected works and plan time to share work at the end of class.

Provide opportunities for students to affirm their personal values.	+	<b>Express</b> (create works that convey an idea, a feeling or a personal meaning)	=	Design projects that focus on developing students' self-worth and value (negating negative stereotypes).
Provide opportunity for students to create a "future story" that includes a long-term goal and a plan for what needs to be done to accomplish that goal.	+	<b>Express</b> (create works that convey an idea, a feeling or a personal meaning) and <b>Envision</b> (learning to picture mentally what cannot be directly observed and imagine possible next steps in making a piece)	=	Design a project about a visual "future story" including necessary steps to get to future destination.
Teach students that intelligence is malleable.	+	<b>Observe</b> (learning to see things that otherwise might not be seen)	=	Teach students that art skills are malleable and can be learned.
Teach students the "growth mindset"	+		=	Teach students that art ability increases with effort.
<b>Strategies Suggested</b>	+	<b>Studio Habits of Mind</b>	=	<b>Art Classroom Practice</b>
<b><i>SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE: Understanding your own emotions, finding solutions to conflict with others, and navigating different social situations.</i></b>				
Provide opportunities for cooperative learning.	+	<b>Reflect: Question and Explain</b> (learning to think and talk with others about an aspect of one's work or working process)	=	Design projects that take a team to complete the task (assign roles so each student is responsible).
Teach students to build emotional boundaries.	+	<b>Express</b> (create works that convey an idea, a feeling or a personal meaning)	=	Identify physical boundaries in the classroom and how to appropriately keep someone out of your space and how you stay in your own space.
Teach students to express their emotions.	+		=	Design projects about visually representing emotions and discuss emotional themes in professional artworks.
Teach students the hidden rules of the middle class explicitly.	+	<b>Observe</b> (learning to see things that otherwise might not be seen)	=	Teach situational awareness by discussing art world and art institutions as examples of middle and upper class.

**Table 5.2 Fostering Character Strengths through Urban Art Education**

<b>Grit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design projects that require engagement with unknowns.</li> <li>• Design projects that push students outside of their comfort zone.</li> <li>• Design projects that have built in obstacles.</li> <li>• Model for students that challenges are often related to temporary and specific causes, not personal failures.</li> <li>• Provide incentive systems that are based in effort, not raw artistic talent.</li> <li>• Present assessment criteria before beginning projects and allow students to set performance goals.</li> <li>• Provide pre-planning time for envisioning desired project outcome and identifying possible obstacles.</li> </ul>
<b>Self-Control</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design projects that explore negative stereotypes students have encountered and create visual culture advertisements about how to remain resilient.</li> <li>• Design projects that explore the multiple ways to communicate one message (for example, strength without fighting).</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for group discussions of artworks.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for criticism and feedback of student artwork from peers.</li> <li>• Plan project timelines so students have to get to work right away rather than waiting until the last minute and teach students to pay attention and resist distractions.</li> </ul>
<b>Optimism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design projects that have built in obstacles.</li> <li>• During art criticism and feedback sessions, ensure feedback is received as a catalyst for change rather than attributed to personal failures.</li> <li>• Design series projects that require reflection before the next step.</li> <li>• Provide opportunity for exhibition of self-selected works and plan time to share work at the end of class.</li> <li>• Design projects that focus on developing students' self-worth and value (negating negative stereotypes).</li> <li>• Design a project about a visual "future story" including necessary steps to get to future destination.</li> <li>• Teach students that art skills are malleable and can be learned.</li> <li>• Teach students that art ability increases with effort.</li> </ul>
<b>Social Intelligence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design projects that take a team to complete the task (assign roles so each student is responsible).</li> <li>• Identify physical boundaries in the classroom and how to appropriately keep someone out of your space and how you stay in your own space.</li> <li>• Design projects about visually representing emotions and discuss emotional themes in professional artworks.</li> <li>• Teach situational awareness by discussing art world and art institutions .</li> </ul>

## **5.8 Recommendations for Future Researchers**

As the tables above suggest, there are many connections between the strategies suggested in the character education field and visual art classroom practice. My hope is that these guidelines can be employed by urban high-poverty art educators to make the use of these strategies more explicit. Visual art educators can develop grit by designing projects that challenge students with obstacles and unknowns and by praising effort not natural artistic talent. We can encourage students to develop self-control by fostering their ability to give and receive feedback from their peers in art critiques. It is important that visual art educators explicitly connect their teaching practice to developing these character traits, so students see their own growth. With further research and focus on the role of visual arts instruction in character development in urban education, visual art could become a cornerstone of reform in urban high-poverty settings.

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