

Self-authored motivations of US adult basic education English learners

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Many adult English learners enroll in U.S. Adult Basic Education programs every year. The federally defined goal of these programs is to increase adult learners' skills to enable them to enter the workforce, but it is not clear whether this purpose matches learners' own motivations for entering these programs. Using the lens of self-authorship theory of adult development, this small qualitative case study investigated learning motivations among three adult EIs in an Adult Basic Education college and career preparation class. Data included two qualitative interviews per participant, demographic questionnaires, and reading scores. Interviews were analyzed using the grounded theory approach to qualitative interview analysis. This study presents findings unique to three learners in this study, which was part of a larger cases study investigating learning experiences of nine adult learners from an adult developmental perspective. The three learners in this study constructed meaning from a developmental perspective growing toward self-authorship, characterized by orienting to an internal authority and self-defined goals. This article discusses these distinct self-authored learning motivations and offers implications for adult education programs to respond to the self-authored learning motivations of adult English learners.

Keywords: *self-authorship, adult development, adult basic education, learning motivation*

Introduction

Recent U.S. national data shows that in 2017 and 2018, more than half a million adults, the vast majority of whom were classified as English learners (ELs), participated in American Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). A primary purpose of ABE programs in the U.S. is to help adult learners acquire skills to increase employability and meet workforce needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). This workforce preparation emphasis shapes how ABE programs are required to measure impact and success. According to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), federally funded ABE programs must report on adult learners' standardized test scores and entry into workforce training, postsecondary education, and the workforce (National Coalition for Literacy, 2021). The National Coalition for Literacy (2021), however, advocates for a broader way of measuring impact that reflects the spectrum of outcomes ABE programs also serve, including civic and family engagement and adults' learning and self-development objectives. Supporting adult learners' own objectives aligns with core assumptions of andragogy, including that adults possess a self-directed orientation in which readiness to learn is rooted in their own goals and social roles (Knowles et al., 2020). From the perspective of adult developmental psychology, this self-directed orientation is particularly relevant among adults constructing meaning from a "self-authoring" stage of development, or developmental perspective. Research on adult EL experiences in ABE programs using the lens of adult constructive development has found that adults' distinct developmental perspectives can shape ways of experiencing learning in relationship to their own goals, including for those constructing meaning from a self-authoring perspective (Ouellette-Schramm, 2019; Kegan et al., 2001). In a seminal longitudinal study of adult ELs in ABE programs, some adult ELs felt supported and engaged while others felt frustrated or lost, depending on the learner's distinct constructive-developmental perspective (Kegan et al., 2001).

This small qualitative study was part of a larger case study investigating the learning experiences of adult ELs in a U.S. ABE college and career preparation class. In that study, three participants developing toward the constructive-developmental perspective of "self-authorship" described distinct learning motivations (Ouellette-Schramm, 2016). The purpose of this paper is to highlight those motivations to help adult educators respond to the self-authored goals that some learners may bring to ABE programs and classrooms.

Self-authorship development and adult ELLs

In the field of adult psychological development, self-authorship can be seen as a stage of self-development integrating complex epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal, or identity, dimensions (Boes, Baxter Magolda & Buckley, 2010). Epistemologically, a self-authoring perspective is characterized by openness to considering new perspectives, a view of knowledge as multilayered and contextual, and complex frameworks for understanding the world and one's place within it (King & Baxter Magolda, 2007). Interpersonally, self-authorship includes a capacity to maintain boundaries, a trust of one's internal voice and a clear orientation to an internal compass rather than living up to others' expectations. Intra-personally, self-authorship is marked by an internally generated sense of authority, a capacity to maintain boundaries, and an orientation to living up to self-expectations. In Kegan's (1982, 1994) model of constructive development, self-authorship is distinguished from two previous developmental orientations, "socializing" and "instrumental." From a socialising developmental orientation, adults orient to living up to the expectations of valued others rather than identifying with an internal compass and identify with their relationships to important others and group memberships, such as religious, political, or community (Kegan, 1982, 1994). From an instrumental orientation, adults identify with tangible self-interest and construct meaning from a concrete, black-and-white perspective (Kegan, 1982, 1994). While Kegan's constructive-developmental model (Kegan, 1982, 1994) highlights these broad developmental orientations, many adults construct meaning partially from one stage, the stage they are growing out of, and partially from the next stage they are growing into. For example and adult can construct meaning between a socializing and self-authoring developmental

orientation. In this transition, an adult makes meaning from both the socializing perspective she is growing out of and the self-authoring perspective she is growing into. For example, she may still feel beholden to valued others' expectations while at the same time, developing her own perspective on those expectations and a stronger internal voice (Baxter Magolda, 2004). Because growth in adulthood is gradual, adults can construct meaning between developmental stages for an indefinite period of time (Baxter Magolda, 2004; Kegan 1982, 1994).

Self-authorship theory derives from Western developmental psychology and much of the original theory was developed through interviews with predominantly white American adults in university settings (Baxter Magolda, 2004; Boes, Baxter Magolda & Buckley, 2010). At the same time, self-authorship development describes personal meaning-making as influenced and shaped by social context, thus offering the possibility of many diverse cultural and socioeconomic influences on the journey toward self-authorship (Boes, Baxter Magolda & Buckley, 2010). Research that provided insight into self-authorship development among adults with diverse cultural identities includes studies of ethnic identity development among Latinx college students (Torres, 2010); experiences that promote self-authorship among college students of colour (King & Baxter Magolda, 2007); and learning experiences among adults who immigrated to the United States (Ouellette-Schramm, 2016; Kegan et al., 2001). These studies have found similar core meaning-making structures among culturally diverse adults developing toward self-authorship, with patterns of growth shaped by varied influences including culture. In her longitudinal research investigating the self-authorship development of Latinx university students, Torres (2010) found that self-authorship development appeared to go hand-in-hand with cultural identity development. As Latinx students developed toward self-authorship, they grew toward more complex racial perspectives from which they recognized racism and saw a choice between positive and negative racial connotations in defining their ethnic identity, and eventually toward being able to understand their own cultural identities and influences, integrate cultural choices into daily experiences, and in some cases become more willing to advocate for other Latinx people (Torres, 2010). Research exploring self-authorship among culturally and racially diverse populations found that among African American-identifying adolescents, self-authorship development can be supported

by resilience, or the ability to successfully bounce back from life challenges and disruptions (Meszaros & Lane, 2010). In addition, King & Baxter-Magolda (2007) found that among undergraduate students who identified as African American or Hispanic, self-authorship development can be marked by experiences of dissonance as these young adults tried to reconcile their peers' disparate perspectives rooted in different cultural and racial contexts. Studies of adults who immigrated to the U.S., including adult ELs in ABE programs, found that learners developing toward self-authorship experienced increased confidence and described valuing education to increase self-expression and to pursue more satisfying career goals (Kegan et al., 2001; Roloff Welch, 2010)

Motivations of adult ELLs in adult college preparation programs

Research on adult EL learning motivations in ABE programs found that factors affecting learning motivation included intrinsic motivation within a particular learning situation or to achieve a longer-term goal, and task value, or the value one assigns to what they're learning (Mellard et al., 2013). Additionally, adult ELs described wanting to improve their writing skills in English to further their career and academic goals (Rahilly, 2004) and were motivated by seeing progress toward their goals (Mellard et al., 2013; Reynolds & Johnson, 2014).

Limited findings on the motivations of self-authored ELs in ABE programs included wanting to become more competent in meeting self-defined standards, with a tendency to approach education with the purpose of becoming something or someone aligned with their own ideals (Portnow, Diamond & Rimer, 2001). Popp (2017) argues that self-authoring ELs in ABE can be distinguished by well-defined personal learning motivations and an interest in learning from different perspectives. Studies of learning experiences among adult learners (Bridwell, 2013) and ELs (Ouellette-Schramm, 2019; Kegan et al., 2001) in ABE programs found that adults developing self-authorship expressed qualitatively distinct learning motivations, and that developmentally intentional learning environments could promote self-authorship development (Roloff Welch, 2010). Characteristics of ABE learning environments supporting self-authorship development included approachable instructors and the opportunity for learners to give input into how class time is used; support for learners' life and

career goals; and constructive feedback from instructors (Roloff Welch, 2010).

Method

Research questions and design

This study was part of a larger qualitative study investigating the learning experiences of ABE ELs in a college preparation course through a constructive-developmental lens, in order to help educators best support developmentally diverse learners. The question guiding this study was, “How do adult ELLs developing toward self-authorship describe their motivations in a college preparation class?”

This investigation employed a qualitative case study design to facilitate a deep understanding of the meaning of an experience from the perspective of those involved within a bounded system (Merriam, 2015), in this case, an ABE college and career preparation program. It employed Kegan’s (1982, 1994) constructive-developmental theory of self-authorship as a lens because of its capacity to distinguish self-authoring learning experiences among non-Western adults (Lindsley, 2011; Villegas-Reimers, 1996), including ABE ELs (Kegan et al., 2001), and its valid and reliable instrument for measuring meaning-making perspectives, the Subject Object Interview (SOI) (Lahey et al., 1998).

Conceptual framework

Kegan’s (1982, 1994) theory of self-authorship distinguishes cognitive, inter- and intrapersonal characteristics distinct from earlier stages of adult development, including socializing and instrumental, and one later stage, self-transcending, which is rare. Table 1 compares key epistemological, interpersonal and intra-personal characteristics of self-authorship, and the prior two stages, socializing and instrumental.

Table 1. Kegan's (1982, 1994) Developmental Stage Characteristics

Instrumental	Socializing	Self-Authoring
Epistemological: Views knowledge as a "thing" that can be obtained. Can only take own perspective.	Epistemological: Views knowledge as coming from experts. Can take others' perspectives.	Epistemological: Views knowledge as constructed; takes a complex perspective and considers multiple viewpoints in relation to one's own.
Interpersonal: Others are experienced in relation to helping or obstructing one's own needs.	Interpersonal: Identifies with important relationships, group membership.	Interpersonal: Can take a perspective on one's relationships; values but is not defined by important others.
Intra-personal: Identifies with tangible characteristics, likes, and dislikes.	Intra-personal: Sense of self is shaped by the expectations of valued others.	Intra-personal: Orients to an internally generated set of values and living up to them.

The SOI, which measures these meaning-making perspectives, distinguishes sub-stages between each major stage. These substages illustrate the gradual nature of adult development, and adults can construct meaning at a substage "between" developmental stages, e.g., between socializing and self-authoring, for an indefinite period of time. Figure 1 shows these substages as measurable on the SOI, with corresponding SOI scores, where 2 indicates instrumental meaning-making, 3 indicates socializing, and 4 indicates self-authoring. The substage 3/4 indicates both socializing and self-authoring stages operating, with socializing still dominant, and the substage 4/3 indicates both socializing and self-authoring stages operating, with self-authoring dominant.

Figure 1. Substages and corresponding SOI scores



Setting and participants

This study occurred in a college preparation class at a nonprofit educational organisation in an urban midwestern ABE program. I was a manager in the organisation; thus, this class was both a convenience

sample, and one in which I was well-poised to develop “productive relationships” with participants (Merriam, 2015). Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants were selected based on a minimum English reading level of High Intermediate as measured by the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System or Test of Adult Basic Education (CASAS), and teacher evaluation of sufficient English verbal skills for conversational-style interviews.

Data collection and analysis

Data included two in-depth qualitative interviews per participant, demographic questionnaires and reading scores.

Subject object interview

To understand participants' constructive-developmental perspectives, the SOI was administered. In this interview, participants are given words or phrases to prompt a story of a recent experience. For example, in response to the phrase “success,” a participant might tell a story of a recent experience achieving something that was challenging. Afterwards, the interviewer asks questions to assess the developmental perspective from which the story was told. Assessing constructive-developmental perspectives requires understanding how interviewees structure their experiences, rather than the content of their experiences; therefore, the SOI can be administered “to investigate how people make sense of their experience in a particular context or environment” (Lacey et al., 1988). Accordingly, to acquire additional information about participants' motivations, the SOI prompts were situated within the college preparation class. For example, instead of being asked, “Tell me about a time you experienced success,” participants were asked, “Tell me about a time you had success in the college preparation class.” To help ensure participants' meaning was accurately understood, I regularly reflected on what I heard and invited correction of possible misunderstandings.

A co-scorer and I independently read and coded each interview using the method described in the guide to administering and interpreting the interview (Lahey et al., 1988).

We are both certified raters, accomplished through training and practice culminating in accurate analyses of at least eight of ten SOI transcripts,

increasing the reliability of the developmental findings (Lahey et al., 1988).

To analyze data from the SOIs related to participants' learning experiences, I employed grounded theory analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1965), beginning with line-by-line coding to help reduce bias or researcher projection of meaning (Charmaz, 2006). Initial literal codes were gradually abstracted during the process of constant comparison, and refined to more tightly fit the data, toward saturation (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1965).

Learning experiences interview

A one-hour learning experience interview was conducted with each participant to understand their learning motivations. This open-ended qualitative interview included questions such as, "What were you hoping to learn?" and "What are the most important things you're learning?"

Data from these interviews were analyzed using the same grounded theory process (Charmaz, 2006) described in the second analytical step of the SOI, including literal line-by-line coding (Charmaz, 2006), abstraction of codes through the process of constant comparison, and continual refinement of the codes to fit the data more tightly, toward saturation (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1965).

Demographic questionnaire and reading scores

To contextualize findings and consider other factors that might impact them (Yin, 2009), I collected demographic information via questionnaire and reading scores as measured by CASAS.

Trustworthiness, researcher's role, and reflexivity

Consistent with the constructivist approach to grounded theory, which emphasizes that researchers' interpretations are constructed rather than objective (Charmaz, 2006), researcher reflexivity was employed. While gathering data, I maintained a journal, noting initial interpretations of interviews including my own theoretical biases (Merriam, 2015). During analysis, reflexive steps included memoing regularly to track my own process of theorizing. I also discussed initial findings during the

research process with an experienced colleague not connected to my research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), inviting alternate interpretations to my own (Krefting, 1991).

Findings

The findings in this study describe the distinct learning motivations of three participants developing toward self-authorship from the original larger qualitative study of nine, which included learners constructing meaning from earlier developmental perspectives.

Participants developing toward self-authorship

Three of the nine participants from the original qualitative study were developing toward a self-authoring perspective. In contrast, in the original study, four participants constructed meaning from an earlier socializing perspective and two constructed meaning from a primarily instrumental perspective. Notably but not surprisingly, self-authorship development was not connected to any one demographic factor. The three participants developing toward self-authorship came from different countries and cultures, including Mexico, Ecuador and China; two were 40 years old while one was 30; and they had been living in the U.S. for time periods spanning one to 25 years. While two had relatively high prior educational levels in their home countries, 11 and 13 years respectively, one had had only an eighth-grade education. While self-authorship development has sometimes been connected to formal education (Baxter Magolda, 2004; Weinstock, 2010), the diversity of backgrounds among these participants developing toward self-authorship is consistent with constructive-developmental theory's emphasis that growth in adulthood depends on the complex balance of support, challenge, and continuity in an adult's life rather than any one factor (Kegan 1982, 1994).

The three learners developing toward self-authorship included Masha, a 30-year-old woman who was ethnically Khazak, but from China; Maria, a 40-year-old woman from Mexico; and Salazam, a 42-year-old man from Ecuador. Masha explained that she was enrolled in the ABE program because she needed to get her GED in the United States to pursue her dream of attending art school. She explained that in China,

after grade eight, she had initially transferred to a teacher training school, which went through grade eleven, and culminated in a teaching credential for elementary schools in China. However, her degree was not recognized as a high school equivalent in the U.S. She explained, "I want to be a great artist... I throw everything, just coming to here, so that's my dream, going to the abroad country, study more. Global related, or... anything for art." (Masha, SOI). Maria had been living in the U.S. for ten months at the time of this study. She was from Cancun, where she had worked for several years as a jewellery salesperson. She had finished high school in Mexico and had studied accounting in college for a year without finishing a degree. She came to the United States to be with her wife, originally from Puerto Rico, who, Maria said, was a teacher and aspiring principal. Maria had originally come to the program for English language classes, but when she learned about the college and career preparation class, decided to take it because it looked interesting to her. While she didn't describe an immediate need to find work, she hoped that her studies would help her to re-enter a career in sales. She explained, "the positive, here, because I happy with my wife, but I hope I can get the same work, the same job." (Maria, SOI). Salazam had been living in the U.S. for 25 years at the time of the study. He'd completed grade eight in a rural Ecuadorian school and had driven to the U.S. with some peers 25 years ago with no English and in search of more opportunities and stayed ever since. He had previously earned his GED and entered the college preparation course to improve his academic English skills to attend a technical college so he could advance in his job. He described his janitorial position as "a dead-end job," and felt confident he could be successful in a supervisory position but needed a college degree to do so. He explained, "I have my GED, got a way back, but I have been away from school for a while, and now, I decided to go a technical school for at least two years but... I need to improve my reading, writing and comprehension" (Salazam, SOI).

Table 2 shows participants' demographics, reading levels and SOI scores.

Table 2. Demographics, English Reading Levels and SOI Scores

Participant	Age	Country of origin	Yrs. school in home country	First language(s)	Yrs. in U.S.	Yrs. school in U.S.	ESL/ABE reading level	SOI score
Maria	40	Mexico	13	Spanish	1	>1	High Int. ESL	3/4
Masha	30	China	11	Khazak, Uzbek, Kurgis, Chinese	4	1	High Int. ESL	3/4
Salazam	42	Ecuador	8	Spanish	25	7	Low Adult Secondary Ed.	4/3

ABE/ESL reading levels included scores within the following National Reporting System level range, from low to high: High Intermediate ESL, Advanced ESL; Beginning ABE Literacy; Beginning Basic Education; Low Intermediate Basic Education; High Intermediate Basic Education; Low Adult Secondary; High Adult Secondary.

Learning experiences developing toward self-authorship

The three participants developing toward self-authorship in this study described learning motivations that were distinct from the motivations expressed by participants constructing meaning from earlier developmental perspectives in the original study. While all participants described wanting to help others as a learning motivation, participants developing toward self-authorship described wanting to help others by developing their own individuality. Consistent with the work readiness goals of many ABE programs, all participants also described wanting increased opportunities from their education; however, participants developing toward self-authorship specifically described wanting greater self-satisfaction from those increased opportunities. Finally, participants developing toward self-authorship uniquely described the motivation of learning for personal development.

Wanting to help others by developing individuality

Participants constructing meaning from earlier developmental perspectives in the larger study described wanting to help others for reasons such as making valued others proud, from a socializing perspective, and wanting to help others in tangible, concrete ways, from an instrumental perspective. However, consistent with the self-authoring orientation to developing an internally defined identity,

participants growing toward self-authorship described wanting to help others by developing their own individuality. Masha explained, “I wanna... go to college, then, also I’m doing going to the art school, and then I have doing my own different idea.” She wanted to leverage her artistic talent and pursuits to help people in her artist community in China broaden their perspectives:

I have to talk about my experience... to the student... because they didn't abroad country, they don't understand... the politics [is] controlling of what kind of knowledge [they have access to] ... so that is very important.

Wanting greater self-satisfaction from increased opportunities

Participants in the original study who were constructing meaning from earlier developmental perspectives described wanting to increase their opportunities for reasons including being a better role model and increased income. While learners developing toward self-authorship also described some tangible learning motivations, including Salazam’s desire for financial stability, all learners developing toward self-authorship also described wanting greater self-satisfaction from the increased opportunities they were pursuing. Salazam explained, “When I came here it was always do something, pursue education. But it’s always in my mind, now, I feel I’m not satisfied, satisfied with myself... because I haven’t achieved... my goals. And so, I’m still pursuing.” Similarly, when asked about her learning motivation, Maria described, “I think first for feel better myself. And then, for get a job like that I want...I think it’s something personal for me. I think it’s make me feel good. It’s just for me...that will be a success for me.”

Learning for personal development

The three participants developing toward self-authorship uniquely described the desire to learn not only for practical reasons, but also for personal development related to self-defined goals or developing a broader perspective. Masha, the only learner in the study to express dissatisfaction with the class, described feeling bored with the emphasis on grammar and a desire for a broader curriculum: “Here, is just for focus for English language, and then that is not too much helpful for community studies... I think people have to be not for English, ‘she,’ ‘he,’

'it,' grammar...you can study that thing, but generally study things, for more thing."

Maria, who had enrolled in the class because it seemed "interesting," described appreciating the content in the course that broadened her perspective: "I hope to know about the many books... or different topics. I like learning every day. Every day! (laughs)." The class had recently read the book, *The Color of My Words*, which Maria described as broadening her perspective through learning about other cultures. She explained, "You discover another world. With the book. And different stories, you learn about the different cultures, different like mine... and when you discover that world, ...I think it's good for myself." She also appreciated the TED Talk covered in the college preparation course, "The Danger of a Single Story," by Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie, who in her talk described realising she had held stereotypes of Mexicans living in America, a group that Maria belonged to. When asked what she liked about that talk, Maria explained, "I think have information for myself."

Salazam also appreciated learning for its own sake:

I feel, I learn a lot about things, things that I didn't know about, like about daily life. Sometimes I bring teacher a topic, a topic to learn, different topics that I haven't, I was not aware before. And I'm learning, so, and it makes me... I thought I knew everything, but I say I am not. I'm still learning."

Salazam also described appreciating learning that helped him not only prepare for his goal of college, but broaden his mind:

It's hard because this assignment has two pages, four pages. It's not a simple one-page topic. It's broad. ... it's challenge, but challenging is better... it's more broad thinking. It expands my knowledge.

Discussion

The motivations that these ELs described for participating in the ABE college and career preparation course aligned with the theoretical construct of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2004; Kegan 1982, 1994). They were also broader than the employment-focused federally defined

goals (U.S. Department of Education, 2021) and reporting requirements (National Coalition for Literacy, 2021) of U.S. ABE programs. The learning motivations these participants described offer rich examples of what self-defined learning motivations can look like among adult ELs constructing meaning from or growing toward self-authorship. This is important because while ABE programs' success for continued funding are measured by metrics related to reading level gains and entry into post-secondary education or the workforce, programming focused solely or primarily on these metrics may not be sufficient to meet the expectations of adult learners themselves.

For Masha, a focus on reading level gains, as in, "English, 'she,' 'he,' 'it,' grammar" alone doesn't capture the broader learning she is interested in, as in, "...you can study that thing, but generally study things, for more thing." In fact, Masha was the only participant in this study who dropped out of the college and career preparation course soon after the study ended. The overall positive learning experiences Maria and Salazam described included yet exceeded what ABE programs are federally obligated to offer. Part of Maria's personal goal for attending the college and career preparation course was consistent with the purpose of developing skills to increase employability, as in, "I hope I can get the same work, the same job" and "...get a job like that I want...I think it's something personal for me." However, what she liked about the class was the opportunity to broaden her perspective, including reading books from people with different backgrounds than hers, as in, "when you discover that world, ...I think it's good for myself." Similarly, while Salazam's personal goals aligned with the employment readiness purpose of ABE programs, as in, "I haven't achieved... my goals. And so, I'm still pursuing," what he appreciated about the class was how it challenged him to broaden his perspective, as in, "it's not a simple one-page topic. It's broad. ... it's challenge but challenging is better... it's more broad thinking." This is important because learners growing toward self-authorship, characterized by an orientation to an internal compass and self-defined goals, may place expectations on their ABE programs exceeding reporting and funding requirements, thus complexifying what ABE programs need to do to satisfy and retain these learners.

Notably, the participants in this study were in the process of developing toward self-authorship and were about midway between

the developmental perspectives of socializing and self-authoring. In line with research with other populations of adult learners which found that adults developing toward self-authorship value “developmentally intentional” educational environments that challenge and support them in this transition, ELs developing toward self-authorship in ABE programs may also experience more intrinsic motivation in programs that support their growing self-authoring capacities. These learners’ self-authoring learning motivations affirm the argument posed by the National Coalition for Literacy (2021) that ABE programs are attracting adult ELs not only for employability skills but also for personal learning and growth goals and shed light on the importance of personal learning and growth, particularly for learners growing toward self-authorship, through an adult developmental lens. A theoretical perspective of self-authorship can help programs consider what these personal learning and growth goals might look like for self-authored learners who may be motivated by broadening their perspective and who may be more likely to assign task value (Mellard et al., 2013) to learning experiences that help them develop their own individuality.

Limitations

The findings of the small qualitative case study are not generalisable, and are explanatory rather than causal (Yin, 2009). Factors outside the scope of this study, such as culturally influenced thinking patterns (Vorobel & Kim, 2011) and cultural identity as influenced by social, historical, and cultural factors (McKinley, 2015) also likely impacted learning experiences. Finally, my analysis was also constructed and necessarily partial (Charmaz, 2006).

Implications

While ABE programs need to meet federal mandates that adult ELs English reading levels increase and that they obtain employment or enter post-secondary education programs, they also face the complex demand of responding to the personal learning and growth goals of these learners to provide programming in line with those who have self-authored learning motivations. Just as ABE programs are accountable to government funding agencies, they can also use self-authorship theory as a lens to exercise accountability to the adult learners they serve.

In the classroom, because ABE proficiency goals are often defined by academic and literacy skills (Pimentel, 2013), instructors can leverage the considerable flexibility they have with course content to select materials that can invite self-authored learners to explore multiple viewpoints and experiences to continue broadening their own perspectives, as in Maria's reflection, "when you discover that world, ...I think it's good for myself." In selecting teaching methods, instructors may employ "constructive-developmental pedagogy" strategies associated with self-authorship development in higher education, including validating learners' knowledge and ability to know, situating learning in learners' lived experiences, and approaching learning as a mutual construction of knowledge among learners and the instructor (Baxter Magolda, 1999). In validating learners' abilities to know, instructors may encourage active sharing of viewpoints, and challenge learners to develop viewpoints through assignments such as the one Salazam valued, e.g., "this assignment has two pages, four pages... it's broad. ... it's challenge but challenging is better." In situating learning in adult learners' lived experiences and goals, instructors may also support learners growing toward self-authorship in developing their individuality and self-satisfaction through a goals-based curriculum in which learners could engage in structured discussions of their goals, challenges, and successes. Drago-Severson (2004) recommends a goal-setting curriculum for supporting developmental growth in ABE settings, and structured learning not only from the instructor but the experiences of fellow adult learners invites learners into the process of mutually constructing knowledge with other learners as well the instructor (Baxter Magolda, 1999). Jordan (2020) similarly recommends that programs can support developmental growth among adult learners through strategies that promote open dialogue, including collective learning activities and sharing of personal stories. Where instructors are already doing this work, a lens of self-authorship development can validate this approach and encourage employing it intentionally and systematically.

On the program level, ABE programs can respond to learners by cultivating characteristics of ABE learning environments supporting self-authorship development including approachable staff and instructors and support for learners' life and career goals (Roloff Welch, 2010). They might support learners' own learning and development

goals by surveying learners at registration about the range of goals and motivation that brought them to the program, including but not limited to the workforce goals they must report on. Self-authoring adult ELs may appreciate opportunities to provide feedback about how programs are helping them pursue their goals could for continuous improvement. While programs may not yet be rewarded by federal reporting and funding structures for these efforts, they may contribute to the qualities of a successful program as related to the broader learning and growth motivations of the self-authored adult learners they serve.

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