



Get Out There: Self-authorship development across a 13-day photography course

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Introduction

- Students perform better in field-based photography courses and are more likely to grasp photography skills than students in a classroom-based instructional format (Kennedy et al., 2018).
- This study focused on students enrolled in an experiential, 13-day photography course at Texas Tech University that used hands-on field excursions to teach key photography concepts.
- This study sought to examine the effects of a field-based, experiential course on students' self-authorship.

Conceptual Framework

- Self-authorship develops over time as, "the internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and social relations" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 269).
- Self-authorship theory is applicable to experiential learning environments because students are situated within Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle and challenged to face and reflect on concrete experiences (Myers, 2020).
- Self-authorship helps students meet the challenges of adult life; therefore, it should be focused on in higher education and associated research (Baxter Magolda, 2008).

Methodology

- The 13 students in the course took pre-, mid-, and post- Self-Authorship Questionnaires (SAQ) (Cronbach's alpha = .085) to measure each self-authorship (SA) dimension, situational coping, interpersonal leadership, self-efficacy, and knowledge creation (Ferencevych, 2004; McGowan, 2016).
- Each dimension was measured on a Likert-scale (1 = *This statement doesn't describe me at all; it isn't like me at all* to 5 = *This statement describes me very well; it is very much like me*) with a series of statements averaged to represent each SA dimension.
- Data was analyzed using paired t tests to identify how students' SA changed throughout the course ($p < .05$).

Findings

- The class (N = 13) consisted of three males (23%) and 10 females (77%) ranging from ages 19 to 22.
- There were seven seniors, five juniors, and one sophomore in the course. One student did not complete the mid-course survey, so they were excluded from analyses.
- Paired t tests revealed change in self-authorship throughout the course (Tables 1 and 2).
- There were two outliers in comparing pre- and post-test results (Table 3), so a sign test was run because distribution was not symmetrically shaped (Laerd, 2015).

Conclusions/Recommendations

- Students did not experience statistically significant self-authorship development during the course, possibly because of the short duration of the class (McGowan, 2016).
- Yet, ACOM educators may use these findings to enhance course opportunities for students to develop self-authorship for adulthood success, which also offer an area for future research.
- A qualitative approach to exploring self-authorship development is recommended (Baxter Magolda, 2008).

Table 1

Paired t tests and effect sizes of Self-Authorship Dimensions Pre- to Mid- Test (N = 12)

Dimension	Pre-test		Mid-test		t(11)	p	Cohen's D
	M	SD	M	SD			
Situational Coping	37.00	5.69	36.67	3.37	.23	.826	.42
Interpersonal Leadership	33.75	4.09	34.00	3.62	-.19	.851	.12
Self-efficacy	28.92	3.85	29.83	3.33	-.93	.374	.14
Knowledge Creation	11.17	1.99	11.33	1.88	-.25	.806	.09
Overall	110.83	12.53	111.83	9.73	-.28	.785	.19

Table 2

Paired t tests and effect sizes of Self-Authorship Dimensions Mid- to Post- Test (N = 12)

Dimension	Pre-test		Mid-test		t(11)	p	Cohen's D
	M	SD	M	SD			
Situational Coping	36.67	3.37	39.25	3.96	-3.34	.007	.96
Interpersonal Leadership	34.00	3.618	36.33	3.68	-2.29	.043	.66
Self-efficacy	29.83	3.33	30.42	3.63	-.64	.538	.18
Knowledge Creation	11.33	1.88	11.25	3.31	.09	.930	.03
Overall	111.83	9.731	117.25	12.79		.064	.59

Table 3

Sign Test Self-Authorship Dimensions Pre- to Post- Test (N = 13)

Dimension	Pre-test Mdn	Post-test Mdn	p
Situational Coping	37	38	.152
Interpersonal Leadership	35	36	.122
Self-efficacy	30	29	.504
Knowledge Creation	11	10	.554
Overall	118	113	.312