More Than an Athlete:

An Examination of the Impact of a Leadership Seminar on the Personal Growth and Development of College Athletes

by

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ABSTRACT

College athletes experience college in a way that is different than their non-athlete peers. Practices, travel time, study hall, and other athletic obligations place strenuous demands on the lives and time of college athletes. As a result, college athletes have less flexible time and are often unable to engage in educationally purposeful activities including high impact practices, that promote their personal growth and development. Using Astin's Student Involvement Theory and Rendon's Validation Theory as frameworks, this mixed methods study examined the impact that participating in a high-impact practice activity had on the personal growth and development of college athletes. To examine how personal growth and development was impacted by participation in a high impact practice activity, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I college athletes at the University of California, Riverside (UC Riverside) participated in the Leadership for Social Change seminar. To measure personal growth and development, the participants completed the Personal Growth Initiative Scale - II (PGIS-II) as a pre- and post-seminar survey. A sample of participants was also interviewed after completing the seminar to further explain the survey results. The results of the study suggest that seminar participation led to personal growth and development for college athletes. Institutions and athletic departments should promote college athletes' personal growth and development by incorporating high impact practices into the college athlete experience.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Patricia Elizabeth McFarlin-Guinyard (March 28, 1950 – September 5, 1996). As my first teacher, you instilled in me a love for learning and taught me to value education. Your legacy as an educator lives on in me and in your grandson. Everything I am and everything I am not; I owe to you. I love and miss you so much. I also dedicate this dissertation to my son, Ajani Tremayne Kennedy. Ajani, your persistence, and resilience inspired this work. Every day I am so proud to be your mom. I love you sonshine!

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To the college athletes that participated in my study, you all are awesome, and your futures are so bright! I can’t wait to see all that you accomplish!

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LEADERSHIP CONTEXT

Throughout my career as a higher education professional, I have had the opportunity to support college athletes in achieving their academic and personal goals. As an academic advisor and counselor, I guided college athletes in progressing toward their degrees, as they balanced their academic and athletic obligations. This included me helping them as they navigated degree requirements and athletic eligibility. In my current role as Director of the Academic Resource Center at the University of California, Riverside, I work to ensure that college athletes are aware of the academic support services available on campus and that they have access to these services. Outside of my professional roles, I have had the opportunity to mentor several college athletes, often giving them advice as they navigated their college career while making the transition from adolescence to adulthood. As both a higher education professional and a mentor, I have observed how the stringent demands placed on the lives of college athletes can prevent them from being engaged in activities outside of intercollegiate sports. This often leads to feelings of isolation and challenges related to their athletic identity.

My research interest is in the personal growth and development of college athletes. Building on my interest and professional background, this dissertation study examined the impact that participating in high-impact practice programming had on the personal growth and development of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I college athletes. Specifically, the study explored how participating in a seminar focused on leadership skill development and social change (called the Leadership for Social Change seminar) influenced the personal growth and development

of NCAA Division I college athletes at the University of California, Riverside. I expected that after participating in the seminar, participants would better understand the impact of their actions/behavior on their communities and society overall. Through session activities, participants learned how to show sensitivity to individual and cultural differences and modify their leadership approach appropriately. They also learned about ways they can work to impact campus, local, state, national, and global issues.

To frame the dissertation study, I explored the following research questions:

1. How does participating in the Leadership for Social Change seminar impact college athletes' personal growth and development?
2. How does participating in the Leadership for Social Change seminar help to validate college athletes as valuable members of their college community outside of their athletic identity?

National Context

The NCAA "is a member-led organization dedicated to the well-being and lifelong success of college athletes" (NCAA, 2020). It is the governing body for college athletics for its member institutions. The NCAA consists of three divisions; Division I, Division II, and Division III, with Division I schools usually having the largest student bodies, athletic department budgets, and scholarships (NCAA, 2020). There are over 1,000 schools and over 100 athletic conferences that make up each NCAA division. Each division has its own eligibility requirements that college athletes must meet to be able to compete. The NCAA website reports that "more than 90% of former student-athletes surveyed 10 years after finishing their eligibility reported they were satisfied with their

overall college experience" (NCAA, 2020). However, research suggests that athletic participation can have a negative impact on the "academic, personal, and social development" of college athletes (Huml, 2018).

College athletes have a college experience that differs from that of their non-athlete peers (Gayles, 2009). Athletic participation brings a unique set of benefits and challenges to the college experience of college athletes. As a benefit, athletic participation creates and provides a sense of community for college athletes that starts early in the college experience (Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016). Athletic participation can also have a positive impact on the persistence and academic success of college athletes (Astin, 1999, Comeaux et al, 2016). While these are positive attributes associated with athletic participation, there are also challenges including injuries, missing class time due to travel schedules, and the difficulty of balancing the roles of being a student and an athlete (Gayles, 2009, Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016). In "What Happens in College? Four Critical Years Revisited", Astin (1993) found that while participating in intercollegiate athletics appears to have a positive impact on physical health and leadership, being a college athlete appears to have a negative impact on "performance of three standardized tests: GRE Verbal, LSAT, and NTE General Knowledge" (p. 387).

College athletes can also experience negative feelings, like isolation, due to their athletic participation (Navarro & Malvaso, 2015). Coffey and Davis (2019) found that the feelings of isolation that college athletes experience are related to their "limited participation and interaction with traditional campus activities and events due to the demands of their collegiate athletic career" (p. 125). Feelings of isolation can also be

related to college athletes often being geographically isolated on campus (Martin, 2008). In a study on former NCAA Division I college athletes that graduated with degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), Comeaux, et al. (2016) found that athletic facilities tend to be on the outskirts of campuses and "away from the academic core" (p. 29) of campus which creates a geographic obstacle for college athletes.

Athletic identity plays a role in the personal growth and development of college athletes. Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993; as cited in Huml, 2018) define athletic identity as "the degree to which an individual identifies with the athletic role" (p. 377). Higher levels of athletic identity tend to result in a negative impact on the academic, personal, and social outcomes of college athletes (Huml, 2018, Bimper, 2014). Research suggests that athletic identity has a negative impact on these outcomes due to the "balancing act" college athletes must perform with their academic and athletic identities (Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016). College athletes are expected to be committed to and excel at both academics and sports. However, due to the time spent engaging with sports-related activities, including team practices, individual workouts, and travel, optimal balance of the student and athlete roles does not appear possible.

The personal growth and development of college athletes is also negatively impacted by the business model of college sports which makes generating revenue, and not college athletes' personal growth and development, a top priority. The subculture of college athletics "more closely resembles a business model" (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011, p. 236). Beyer and Hannah (2000; as cited in Ishaq & Bass, 2019) explain that "the

danger of this situation is that athletic programs will lose their educational focus and become just another form of big business" (p. 180). Christopher Emdin also addresses the business model of college sports in his book "Ratchetdemic" (2021), when he states, "The wholeness of athletes is not of any particular significance to institutions, as long as their performance in the one small slice of life (the field or the court) that the institution profits from reaps the expected benefits" (p. 76). As documented in HBO's "The Scheme" (2020), revenue generating sports, which include men's basketball and football, often prioritize money and winning above the holistic development of college athletes. To win, college athletes must devote a great deal of time and energy to remaining academically eligible and to excelling in their sport. These demands do not allow time for college athletes to engage in activities such as high-impact practices, that promote personal growth and development.

Settersten and Ray (2010) describe four-year colleges as social institutions that are "explicitly designed as a bridge between a student's family and the wider society" and as being "tailored to provide the sort of semi-autonomy that characterizes early adulthood" (p. 34). In other words, colleges and universities provide a space for young people to grow and develop into adults. As such it is important that colleges and universities are intentional about creating an environment that promotes the personal growth and development of all college students including athletes. The personal growth and development that occurs while transitioning to adulthood is a significant component of the college experience. When examining their overall college experience under this framework, it is important to remember that amid their academic and athletic demands, college athletes are also transitioning to adulthood, which brings its own set of

challenges. In addition to initiatives that support college athletes in being successful academically, like mandated study time, and initiatives that improve athletic performance like practice and weight training, college athletes should also engage in programming that promotes their personal growth and development as they transition to adulthood. Programming could include career counseling and life skills, and activities that address the transition out of sport. For most college athletes, college is the last time they will play their sport. Growing and developing into an adult, while leaving their athletic identity behind, can be difficult for some.

In the article, "College Student Athlete Success Both In and Out of the Classroom", Carodine, Almond, and Gratto (2001), describe successful programs for college athletes as those that address the academic, athletic, and personal needs of athletes. According to the authors, "a personal development program in the athletic program will demonstrate four key elements: an assessment of the personal development needs of the student athletes, the involvement of all student athletes in programming opportunities, the collaboration of campus and community resources for student programming, and the evaluation process that assesses the effectiveness of the personal development programs" (p. 30). They go on to explain that "personal development programming needs can be accomplished through workshops, menu-driven programs, seminars, and credit or noncredit courses" (p. 30). These are activities that are often a part of high-impact practices.

Educationally Purposeful Activities

The most significant element of students' personal growth and development in college is their engagement with educationally purposeful activities (Astin, 1993; Hu and Kuh, 2002). Educationally purposeful activities are those that "contribute directly to desired outcomes" (Huh and Kuh, 2002, p. 555), including personal development. Carr et al, (2014) explain that educationally purposeful activities "are characterized by (a) student time on task, (b) use of institutional resources, and (c) student-faculty or student-peer interactions on substantive topics" (p. 4).

Educationally purposeful activities include high-impact practices. High-impact practices are characterized as "enriching learning experiences" that are "positively associated with student engagement, deep and integrated learning, and personal and educational gains" (Zilvinskis et al., 2022, p. 1). High-impact practices include undergraduate research, collaborative projects, and service-learning. All are known to have a positive impact on development and learning (Priest & Clegorne, 2015, Kuh, O'Donnell, & Schneider, 2017). While some research indicates that college athletes participate in educationally purposeful activities at the same rate as their non-athlete peers, other research suggests that there is a difference in engagement between the two groups (Comeaux & Crandall, 2019). As a former college athlete, the mother of a former college athlete, and the Director of an academic support center, I have seen firsthand how participating in college sports monopolizes the time of college athletes and prevents participation in other activities, including high-impact practices. My dissertation study sought to explore the impact that participating in a specific high-impact practice, a

leadership seminar that emphasizes social change, has on the personal growth and development of NCAA Division I college athletes.

This dissertation study adds to the growing body of work on the impact of educationally purposeful activities on the personal growth and development of college athletes. While there have been several studies on the impact of educationally purposeful activities on college students overall, there are significantly fewer studies that focus on the impact of educationally purposeful activities on college athletes specifically (Comeaux et al., 2011; Comeaux et al., 2014; Rettig and Hu, 2016, Comeaux & Crandall, 2019). In a study published in 2011, Comeaux et al, found that engagement in educationally purposeful activities has a positive impact on first-year college athletes. Woods et al, (2019) found that Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) "provide quality student engagement for its student athletes" (p. 287) that "allow for a strong networking tree that can lead to future employment, internships, and advanced educational opportunities stemming from the legacy afforded to HBCU culture" (p. 289). Rettig and Hu (2016) found that engaging in educationally purposeful activities "contributes uniquely to desired educational outcomes for student-athletes in high-profile sports" (p. 444). In the same study, the authors describe engagement in educationally purposeful activities as important to "gains in personal and social development" (p. 445). Similarly, in a review of the literature on the benefits of educationally purposeful activities for Division I athletes, Comeaux & Crandall (2019) found that "evidence points to the potential that educationally sound engagement opportunities have for athletes early on in their undergraduate experience" (p. 79).

Personal Context

The college athlete population is one that is special to me because of my own experience as a track and field college athlete. Being a college athlete gave me a sense of community, which was especially meaningful in college. However, in both high school and college, there were times when I struggled with managing my academic and athletic obligations and couldn't be involved in other activities as a result. There was a significant difference in the physical toll on my body in college versus high school. In college, the weightlifting and running workouts were a lot more rigorous than in high school, and I was often too tired to study afterwards, let alone engage in other activities. As a college athlete, I also struggled with injuries that impacted my ability to practice and compete. I competed in college for two years before deciding to end my athletic career. Without my athletic obligations, I was able to become more involved on campus. I started working an on-campus job, joined student organizations, and participated in an internship. These activities allowed me to cultivate other interests and supported my growth and development as a whole person, outside of my identity as an athlete.

In recent years I supported my son in his experience as a college athlete. My son competed in NCAA Division I men's basketball for a little over 4 years. He benefited from the sense of community that comes with being a college athlete. Being a member of the college athlete community allowed him to be a part of a cohort that supported him in acclimating to college in his first year, and adjust to a new campus when he transferred to another institution. As an athlete, he also benefited from priority course registration every term, which allowed him to enroll in classes before other students. Our family also

benefited from my son being a scholarship athlete. Due to receiving an athletic scholarship, I did not have to pay any costs out of pocket toward my son's education for his first two years of college, nor did he have to take out any student loans.

In addition to the benefits of being a college athlete, my son also experienced challenges in balancing the responsibilities of being a student and an athlete. These challenges included demanding weekly schedules due to travel and being advised to enroll in classes for which he was not prepared and did not meet the prerequisites. During one term, my son had an 8:00a.m. class on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. After traveling for games, he would often get to his room at 1:00a.m. or 2:00a.m. and be in class at 8:00a.m. As a result, he was often tired in class and not very talkative. The instructor contacted my son's coach and reported that my son was depressed and withdrawn and should see a mental health professional for treatment immediately. At no point did the instructor have a conversation with my son about the situation, even after being told by the coaching staff that my son was simply tired from traveling.

During his time as a college athlete, my son did not participate in any activities outside of intercollegiate sports. When I asked him about getting involved on campus, he shared that he did not have the time to be involved with anything outside of his academics and sports. Now that he has graduated and is no longer playing basketball, he has shared with me that he is looking forward to exploring different things and discovering new interests. My son's lack of involvement in activities outside of sports in college is not unique, especially when it comes to college athletes that participate in the revenue-generating sports of men's basketball and football (James & Ross, 2004).

In preparation for my dissertation study, I conducted exploratory cycles of research where I interviewed former UC Riverside college athletes about their college experience. The participants discussed not being able to participate in campus programs while in college, including high-impact practices that support students in the "achievement of deep learning, [and] significant engagement gains" (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2020). High-impact practices include common intellectual experiences, community-based learning, internships, collaborative projects, and study abroad (Kuh, O'Donnell, and Schneider, 2017).

Despite their importance, I have observed that college athletes tend not to participate in high-impact practice activities during their collegiate careers. This lack of participation is most likely due to the other priorities that are placed on their lives. Martin (2008) explains that "college athletes generally have more time constraints and pressures than non-athletes" (p. 286). Hectic practice and travel schedules, as well as mandated study hall hours, do not leave time for activities outside of sports and academics. Even with the demands placed on their lives, college athletes should have the opportunity to participate in high-impact practice activities such as collaborative projects, community-based learning, and common intellectual experiences, that have a positive impact on their growth and development (Ishaq & Bass, 2019).

When contemplating the impact of athletic participation on the personal growth and development of college athletes, one must consider the role of the commercialization of college sports. Sack (2009) proposes three conceptual models when considering the commercialization of college sports: intellectual elitism, academic capitalism, and

athletes' rights. Intellectual elitists are critical of the commercialism of intercollegiate athletics. They believe that higher education's mission "is not to create athletes, but well-educated citizens whose education is enhanced by competitive sports" (p. 78). Proponents of intellectual elitism believe that higher education, athletics included, should "be a community of scholars and students insulated from the rampant commercialism" (p. 78). Academic capitalists believe that "big-time college athletes are amateurs engaging in sports as an avocation" (p. 79). Supporters of the academic capitalist model tend to believe that "commercialism is a good thing as long as commercial activities are perfectly in tune with the values, mission, and goals of higher education" (p. 79).

My experiences as a college athlete, the mother of a college athlete, and a higher education professional have led me to align more with the third model described by Sack, athletes' rights. Athletes' rights proponents "assume that collegiate sport as commercial entertainment is deeply embedded in the fabric of American life and will remain so" (p. 80). Those that align with the athletes' rights model, "argue that intercollegiate athletics is a commercial entertainment business aligned with NCAA and member institution policies that are inequitable for Division I athletes" (Comeaux, 2020, p. 4). Like others that support the athletes' rights perspective, I believe that as students and workers, college athletes "deserve the same educational opportunities as other students; as workers, they deserve the same rights as other employees" (p. 80). Due to this perspective, I use the term "college athlete" throughout this dissertation, instead of "student-athlete". The term "student-athlete" serves to perpetuate the NCAA's myth of amateurism by implying that college athletes are more "student" than "athlete", even though they tend to spend more time and energy on their athlete role than their student

role. The term “student-athlete” was crafted by Walter Byers, former NCAA executive director to circumvent “the dreaded notion that NCAA athletes could be identified as employees” (1995; as cited in Comeaux, 2020).

As explained previously, this dissertation study examined NCAA Division I college athletes as they participated in a leadership seminar focused on social change. My experiences as a college athlete and as the mother of a former college athlete contributed to my ability to understand the demands placed on the time of college athletes. As a result, I structured the seminar implemented for the study so that most of the activities took place during the seminar sessions and required minimal work outside of the sessions. My experiences also allowed me to understand discussions that took place during the seminar related to the college athlete experience. For example, when the study participants discussed topics related to being a college athlete like eligibility, mandated study hall, and coach/athlete relationships I was able to fully understand the context.

Local Context

The dissertation study took place at the University of California (UC) Riverside. The seminar curriculum was provided by the Academic Resource Center (ARC). UC Riverside is one of 10 University of California campuses and is a NCAA Division I member institution. The intercollegiate athletic program is made up of 15 men’s and women’s sports and is a member of the Big West Conference. The ARC is the department responsible for providing centralized academic support to UC Riverside’s undergraduate students. The ARC provides several dynamic programs that promote student success and development. These programs include tutoring, peer mentoring, and

study and life skills workshops and seminars. The main goal of the ARC's programming is to help students develop skills that will help them be successful during their college career and beyond.

As previously stated, I have seen college athletics give college athletes the opportunity to earn their degrees without incurring student loan debt which is a huge benefit. However, I have also seen college athletes struggle academically and not be able to participate in certain opportunities due to their athletic participation. As one example of this at the university where I currently work, a men's basketball team member was interested in studying abroad. He was told by his coaching staff that he could not participate. Having more opportunities built-in for college athletes to engage in high-impact practices such as studying abroad, would allow them to experience the positive impact these practices can have on their college career (Kuh, O'Donell, & Schneider, 2017).

In addition to observing college athletes missing out on some academic and co-curricular opportunities, I have also noticed that college athletes are not always afforded the opportunity to make some of the decisions that come with being a college student. The lives of college athletes "are often highly structured and monitored, with many important decisions being made by coaches and other athletic personnel" (Martin 2009, p. 286). I have observed college athletes having their living accommodations decided for them (i.e., not having a choice but to room with teammates) by the athletics department staff. I have also observed college athletes being told what classes to enroll in based on

the time of day the classes meet and not necessarily the college athlete's interests or degree requirements.

When it comes to the college experience of athletes, it appears that institutions focus on academic outcomes for the purpose of NCAA eligibility and performance in their sport (Comeaux 2015, Potuto & O'Hanlon 2007). This is demonstrated by resources invested in college athlete academic services; state-of-the art facilities and academic support staff dedicated to college athletes (Comeaux et al., 2016, Gayles, 2009). Institutions also support college athletes in developing athletically by providing state-of-the-art athletic facilities, trainers, facilities for film sessions, etc.

One of the objectives of UC Riverside's current strategic plan is to "improve undergrad student success and experience" (Watkins, 2022) to increase retention, persistence, and graduation rates. Improving students' overall experience at the university means both inside and outside of the classroom. The goal of increasing retention and graduation rates can seem daunting and be overwhelming. To effectively impact retention, persistence, and graduation rates, we should identify the needs of specific populations of students, and work to meet those needs. By examining the impact of participating in a high-impact practice on the personal growth and development of UC Riverside's athletes, I hope to provide information that will help to improve their success, overall experience, and lead to higher retention, persistence, and graduation rates.

Problem of Practice

The NCAA reports that "more than 90% of former student-athletes surveyed 10 years after finishing their eligibility reported they were satisfied with their overall college

experience" (NCAA, 2020). However, there is research to suggest that athletic identity can negatively impact the academic outcomes and personal development of student athletes (e.g., Huml, 2018; Bimper, 2014). The negative impact of athletic identity on academic and personal outcomes could be the result of athletes not being able to explore other aspects of their identity through participation in educationally purposeful activities. At UC Riverside, college athletes tend not to utilize academic enrichment programming like the workshops and seminars facilitated by the Academic Resource Center (ARC). Academic enrichment programming facilitated by the ARC, academic advising offices, and student affairs areas, serve to promote holistic development and help students develop skills that allow them to be successful as students and after graduation.

The problem of practice I explored through this dissertation study was that due to their athletic obligations, NCAA Division I college athletes tend to not participate in high-impact practice activities that promote personal growth and development. The purpose of the dissertation study was to examine the impact that participating in the "Leadership for Social Change" seminar had on the personal growth and development of NCAA Division I college athletes at UC Riverside. The Leadership for Social Change seminar allowed the study participants to explore their identity outside of being an athlete and to develop leadership skills through exploring personal, group, and community values. As explained previously, the curriculum for the "Leadership for Social Change" seminar falls under the high-impact practice category of "diversity learning", which includes programs and experiential activities that "introduce and have students experience communities, cultures and world views that differ from their own…with the

aim of increasing understanding and appreciation of human differences" (Kuh, O'Donnell, & Schneider, 2017, p. 10).

Action Research Study

This dissertation study served as the culmination of an action research project; specifically, practical action research was utilized. Action research is a systematic way of conducting research that is utilized to solve a particular problem in an educational setting (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019 and Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2015). In action research practitioners are the researchers and work to address issues in their educational setting (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Action research is unique in that the "action researcher cycles or spirals back and forth among reflection about a problem, data collection, and action" (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2015, p. 432). Practical action research is used when the researcher is looking to "enhance the practice of education through the systematic study of a local problem" (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 589).

In the exploratory cycles of research leading to my dissertation study, a qualitative research design was utilized; narrative research. Elkatawneh (2016) describes narrative research as a "qualitative research method which takes written or spoken words of some individuals' personal stories as data for analysis," (p. 2). I chose to use a narrative research design, because I wanted to hear about the college athlete experience in the words of the former college athletes. The perspective that comes from reflecting on a past experience differs from the perspective while going through a current experience. I was interested in hearing how the participants reflected on their college athlete experience. Narrative research allowed me to capture the value of the participants'

experiences as former college athletes. To collect the data, I used semistructured interviews where I asked former UC Riverside college athletes questions about their overall experience (Cycle 0) and about the stress they experienced as college athletes at UC Riverside, and how they managed that stress (Cycle 1). In the exploratory research cycles, former college athletes discussed not being able to be involved in activities outside of sports including those that have a positive impact on the personal growth and development of students.

Cycle 0

In Cycle 0, I interviewed three former college athletes about their academic, personal, and social experiences as college athletes. The interview participants were former college athletes that competed in men's and women's basketball, and women's track and field. I elected to interview former college athletes for this phase of research because I wanted to use their insight to help inform my dissertation study and also to inform the type of innovation that can be beneficial to college athletes' personal growth and development. The interview questions for Cycle 0 were aimed at exploring the participants' college experience as college athletes. The participants were asked about the benefits and limitations they felt their athletic participation brought to their college experience. To help me gain insight on the kind of intervention/innovation that would be beneficial to college athletes, there was also a question about the type of programming that would help college athletes. I identified three key themes in the interview data; strict time constraints, lack of social activities outside of athletics, and the opportunity to travel seen as a benefit to the college athlete experience.

Time Constraints. All the interview participants discussed the strict constraints placed on their time as college athletes. In addition to their classes, practice, and competition schedules, all three participants discussed being required to attend mandatory study hall hours. Participant 1 explained that the number of study hall hours college athletes were required to complete "was determined by their GPA" and that college athletes could be assigned up to "seven hours of study hall a week". Participant 1 also explained that there were consequences if study hall hours were not completed such as having to "help set up [track] meets" and being held out of competitions.

The interview participants also talked about how constraints on their time impacted their ability and desire to get involved in campus activities and organizations. This is consistent with Martin's (2009) explanation on the impact of athletic obligations. He explains that the demanding schedule of student athletes "inevitably creates various time constraints and leaves these students with a limited amount of time to fully integrate into the campus community" (p. 285). All the participants talked about how their time was consumed by their sport and schoolwork, as a result they did not participate in many campus activities or events outside of athletics. Participant 3 explained that their schedule consisted of, "Go to class, go to practice, and games". Participant 2 described a term when their classes started at 7:00AM and due to practice, weight training, and mandated study hall, their day on campus did not end until after 7:00PM. Participant 2 explained, "After being on campus for 12 hours, I don't want to hang around campus just for the sake of hanging around campus."

The interview participants also described how the physical exhaustion of being a college athlete contributed to their demanding schedules. Unlike their non-athlete peers, college athletes are required to exercise for hours every day. Workouts include practice with teammates, individual workouts, and weight training sessions. Participant 3 explained, "The demands of practice and games, you're exhausted. So a lot of times, I would just prefer resting than doing anything else."

Lack of Social Activities Outside of Athletics. When asked about whether their athletic participation brought any limitations to their college experience, the participants all talked about having limited social experiences outside of athletics, due to the time spent on their sport and school. Participant 1 described social events that the athletics department hosted for college athletes at the beginning of each academic year:

> As far as social, at the beginning of the school year they had a week of basically where all the athletes of all the sports would come together. They would have a pool party social, a sexual assault [prevention] social, they would have a scavenger hunt social, all just for athletes. It was nice that they did that, however people never really mixed and mingled after that. We kinda just went back to our own separate sports.

Participant 2 also described interacting pretty much exclusively with teammates socially. He explained, "I had so many things that were mandatory, class and everything like that. Outside of hanging with my guys [teammates] after practice and a couple of parties here and there, the social experience is not the same as a regular student."

All the participants discussed not being able to attend parties or participate in campus activities and programming. Participant 1 even described being discouraged from

joining a sorority, “Coaches don’t like athletes to be in sororities and fraternities. If you decide to join, don’t be surprised if you get treated different.” Participant 3 talked about going home anytime they had a break and therefore not having “much of a social life” due to their life “being consumed with sports”. She also talked about wanting to study abroad, “I did want to study abroad but didn’t have the opportunity to do that until my senior year and then at that point, I didn’t want to miss out on other things [on campus] by being out of the country.”

The Opportunity to Travel. When asked about whether athletic participation brought benefits to their college experience, all the participants mentioned having the opportunity to travel as a benefit. Participant 2 recalled an experience when the team was able to attend the Michigan vs. Ohio State football game, “We got to see the Ohio State vs Michigan football game in the Big House with 60,000 people. Definitely an experience I probably wouldn’t have had.” Participant 3 explained that having the opportunity to “travel domestically and internationally because I was a student-athlete” was a benefit that was experienced due to athletic participation.

Based on the responses from the participants, it appears that the social life of college athletes suffers the most because of athletic participation. As a result of their obligations to their sport and their academics, the participants couldn’t participate in campus events, or have the kinds of social experiences that their non-athlete peers had. It also appears that they were not able to socialize frequently with their non-athlete peers or use campus resources as frequently. In discussing the limitations athletic participation brings to the college athlete college experience, Participant 2 said “Something has to give and as a student-athlete it’s usually your social life.” Based on the interview data, future

work could examine ways for college athletes to have a more socially holistic college experience.

Based on the responses surrounding their academic and social experiences, and the benefits and limitations of athletic participation, it appears that college athletes do not experience the same level of autonomy over their college experience as their non-athlete peers. The interview participants described how their classes, workout times, study hall times, and practices were planned for them. One participant mentioned not being able to adjust their daily schedule if needed, to get work done. “I can’t skip practice if I have a paper due that day”. Based on the interview data, future work could examine strategies that will allow college athletes to have more ownership in their college experience.

The information shared by participants in Cycle 0 provided insight on the academic and social experiences of college athletes. The participants discussed the benefits and limitations that their athletic participation had on their college experience. While the data and its analysis are limited because there were only 3 participants and they all competed at the same university, it provided information that helped to inform my Cycle 1 research.

Cycle 1

In Cycle 1, I continued to seek insight into the college athlete experience but for this cycle, I focused on possible stressors and the ways that college athletes manage stress. I chose to focus on stress and stress management for this cycle of research because of what I learned from the literature and the data collected in Cycle 0 about the college athlete experience. Melendez (2010) explains that college athletes experience “increased levels of stress associated with changes in playing status, frustrations with athletic role,

interpersonal conflict, and threats to self-esteem" (p. 346). Melendez's findings align with the data collected in Cycle 0, where participants talked about the stress of balancing athlete and student responsibilities.

For Cycle 1, I interviewed two former men's and women's basketball college athletes. The themes that emerged from the Cycle 1 interview data were consistent with the literature on college athletes' college experience and also aligned with the data collected in Cycle 0. A theme that emerged again was the challenge of balancing the roles of student and athlete. The study participants discussed how balancing athletic and academic obligations was stressful. One study participant explained, "There's definitely times where it will just be a long day like practice and weights, and study hall, and then you have to go home. And then, have to find food, and then do more homework so it definitely gets stressful at times and plus, especially during season too because you're traveling and just trying to stay on top of homework, and everything can be very stressful."

The participant's explanation aligns with Jayakumar & Comeaux's (2016) discussion about role conflict. They explain that "On average, Division I college athletes devote more than forty hours per week to sport-related activities, not including additional hours potentially lost due to mental or physical fatigue or injuries" (p. 490). The other study participant explained that not knowing how to balance obligations causes stress. The participant shared, "I feel like most of the athletes [are] stressed because they don't know how to balance, like their schoolwork and being able to practice…like because in high school it's kind of easy doing that. But in college you're traveling and being gone for weeks at a time. So, it's kind of hard to manage your time and stress." Jayakumar &

Comeaux also found that “striking a healthy balance between academic, social, and athletic lives can be difficult; many college athletes find that the demands of one role make it difficult to meet the demands of the other” (p. 490).

Another theme that emerged from the data was the role of mental health resources in helping college athletes manage stress. In addition to the mental health challenges that many college students face such as depression and anxiety, “student-athletes possess additional stressors that are linked to mental health issues” (Ryan et al., 2018, pp. 67-68). When asked what type of resources or programming would be helpful to college athletes in managing stress, one participant responded, “I feel like, just have like a professional person that focuses on like, stress and things like that around the team as much as possible. I guess you call that like a therapist or something.” This is consistent with the discussion in the Ryan et al. article, which listed “access to a practitioner with an understanding of the student-athlete experience” (p. 73) as one of the top three conditions that would increase college athlete access to mental health care.

One of the study participants discussed “check ins” that the coaching staff would do with the team and how they were beneficial in managing stress. I coded this as “personal/individual attention”. The participant shared:

> I can definitely say that assistant coaches definitely checked in a lot on us. They were very like they’d call us into their office just to see how we were doing, and I think went a long way. And it didn't take too much time out of the day, like it wasn't like we had to go like an hour after like a long day it's just like, oh hey come to my office really quick and just check in. So, I think that worked, even

> though it wasn't like a set program…Yeah and then just like if I was like stressed and I'm like, oh my god I have to do all this stuff right now like they were there to like kind of calm me down.

The participant's experience with the coaching staff's "check-ins", aligns with Validation Theory. According to Validation Theory, when faculty and staff members intentionally and proactively affirm students, they are validating the students as important parts of the campus community (Linares & Munoz, 2011). In the scenario described by the study participant, the assistant coaches served as validation agents. The "check ins" served to help "foster personal development and social adjustment" (p. 12).

My Cycle 1 study explored the stressors that former college athletes experienced while in college and how they managed stress. The themes that emerged from the study were the challenge of balancing the roles of student and athlete, the role of mental health resources, and personal/individual attention. From the study, I found that the college athletes' stressors include balancing student and athlete responsibilities specifically traveling during the season. To manage stress, I found that college athletes talk to their coaching staff and would like to have mental health professionals that work specifically with issues related to the college athlete experience.

The data collected from the exploratory cycles of research provided me with insight into the college athlete experience. From the Cycle 0 study, I learned about the academic, personal, and social experiences of college athletes, and found that there are benefits and limitations associated with being a college athlete. According to the study participants, the common benefit associated with the experience is the opportunity to

travel. The limitations include time constraints that prevent involvement in activities outside of sports and the stress caused by strenuous schedules. The data collected from the Cycle 0 study, led me to want to learn more about the stress college athletes experience and the sources of that stress. From the Cycle 1 study I learned that balancing academic and athletic obligations was a major cause of stress. I also found that mental health services that specifically address the college athlete experience and programming that has built in "check ins" where coaches and others simply check on college athletes' wellbeing would be helpful. The data from the exploratory cycles gave me insight into the developmental needs of college athletes and the type of programming that could be beneficial to their personal growth and development.

Dissertation Innovation

Building on findings from these exploratory studies, for the dissertation study, I facilitated the Leadership for Social Change seminar with a group of college athletes. The seminar taught the participants the skills needed to communicate effectively as leaders. The seminar activities were designed to develop interpersonal, leadership, and communication skills, while focusing on enhancing worldview and learning how to impact the community.

Research Questions

To examine the impact of the Leadership for Social Change seminar on the personal growth and development of NCAA Division I college athletes, I explored the following research questions to guide my study:

1. How does participating in a leadership seminar impact college athletes' personal growth and development?

2. How does participating in the Leadership for Social Change seminar help to validate college athletes as valuable members of their college community outside of their athletic identity?

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND SUPPORTING LITERATURE

As I described in chapter 1, college athletes have a unique college experience that brings its own set of benefits and challenges (Gayles, 2009). As a benefit, athletic participation creates and provides a sense of community for college athletes that starts early in their college experience (Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016). Athletic participation can also have a positive impact on persistence and academic success (Astin, 1999, Comeaux et al, 2016). While these are positive attributes associated with athletic participation, there are also challenges such as injuries, missing class time due to travel schedules, and the difficulty of balancing the roles of being a student and an athlete (Gayles, 2009, Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016). College athletes are often unable to participate in co-curricular activities outside of intercollegiate sports and can experience negative feelings such as isolation because of their athletic participation (Navarro & Malvaso, 2015). In this dissertation study, I examined the impact of participating in the Leadership for Social Change seminar on personal growth and development of college athletes.

To answer the research questions, frame the dissertation study, and provide insight on the design and evaluation of the study's innovation, I used two theoretical frameworks: Alexander Astin's Student Involvement Theory and Laura Rendon's Validation Theory. Student Involvement Theory focuses on the ways students spend their time while in college and suggests that the more energy students put into being a student, the more successful they will be. Validation Theory focuses on the importance of faculty

and staff taking the first step in affirming students as important members of the campus community.

Student Involvement Theory

Student Involvement Theory focuses on how students spend their time; how involved they are. Astin (1999) describes involvement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 518). Gayles (2015) characterizes involvement as "any activity on a college campus that motivates and encourages students to spend time on campus" (pp. 214-215). Student Involvement Theory suggests that students' learning, development, and persistence in college is impacted by the time and energy they dedicate to their college experience, and "that the most precious institutional resource may be student time." (Astin, 1999, p. 522). The more energy students dedicate to their college experience, or the more involved they are, the more gains they will see in their learning, development, and their persistence. According to Astin, "a highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students" (p. 518).

Astin's Student Involvement Theory is often used to discuss the success of college students overall. Researchers that study college sports also use the theory to discuss the unique experience of college athletes. In the book, "Student Engagement in Higher Education", Gayles (2015) explains that over involvement, spending too much time on activities, can have a negative impact on students' experience. For example,

students who work several hours per week off campus are not able to be as involved on campus (Gayles, 2015). Athletic participation can lead to college athletes being over involved in athletics and have a negative impact on their college experience. In spending "more than forty hours per week on sport related activities" (Comeaux, 2013, p. 285), college athletes' obligation to their sport takes them away from campus, giving them less time to fully engage with the campus community (Gayles, 2015). As previously explained, even when on campus, college athletes are often isolated from the campus community (Gayles, 2015, Navarro & Malvaso, 2015, Comeaux et al. 2016). A study by Huml, Hancock, and Bergman (2014) found that college athletes felt that "spending time in the athletic academic center hindered their ability to study, connect with faculty, and participate in organizations and community service" (p. 424).

Research indicates that college athletes benefit from involvement like their non-athlete peers. In an article discussing the purposeful engagement of first-year Division I athletes, Comeaux et al, (2011) researched first-year athletes' involvement in "educationally sound activities in college" (p. 35). As a result of the study, the authors recommend that student affairs practitioners and athletics departments work together to implement programming that allows athletes and non-athletes to interact (Comeaux et al., 2011). The results of the study also support the need for better collaboration between athletics departments and student affairs to encourage first-year athletes' involvement in educationally purposeful activities that can promote "their personal and learning development" (p. 48).

Student Involvement Theory was one of the college student development models used by Cooper (2016) to develop the Excellence Beyond Athletics (EBA) approach. The EBA approach is a "series of best practices and recommendations for enhancing the academic achievement and holistic development of Black male student-athletes at post-secondary institutions in the U.S." (p. 271). The approach includes "six holistic development principles (HDPs): (1) self-identity awareness, (2) positive social engagement, (3) active mentorship, (4) academic achievement, (5) career aspirations, and (6) balanced time management" (p. 272). In the EBA approach, positive social engagement includes encouraging Black male college athletes to participate in community service and other educationally purposeful activities. Participating in these activities would serve to "create a strong sense of purpose at the institution beyond their athletic involvement" (p. 275).

In a study that examined factors related to college athletes' involvement in educationally purposeful activities and their impact, Gaston-Gayles & Hu (2009) also found that athletes benefit from being involved in educationally purposeful activities. The study used interaction with faculty, interaction with students other than teammates, participation in student groups, participation in academic related activities, cultural attitudes and values, personal self-concept, and gains in communication and learning skills as engagement variables (p. 324). The study found that "the kinds of activities student athletes engage in during college have a greater impact on personal self-concept and learning communication skills regardless of background characteristics" (p. 328). Differences were found between the athletes in high profile sports and low profile sports related to interaction with students other than teammates. "Interaction with students other

than teammates and participation in academic related activities were positively and significantly related to learning and communications skills reported by student athletes in low profile sports, but not for student athletes in high profile sports" (p. 327).

Student Involvement Theory is based on five postulates. To explain how Student Involvement Theory was utilized in my dissertation study, particularly in the goals for and activities of the Leadership for Social Change seminar, I will explain each of the postulates and how they relate to my study.

Postulate 1 is that "involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects" (p. 519). Astin (1999) explains that the objects can be "highly generalized" like being a college student in general or "highly specific" like participating in a specific activity (p. 519). By participating in the Leadership for Social Change seminar, the participants in my dissertation study invested physical and psychological energy in a specific activity, the seminar. The seminar was designed to promote the investment of physical and psychological energy by asking that participants be committed to attending and being on time for each session, and by asking that they actively participate in all activities and discussions. The seminar further promoted the investment of psychological energy by asking that participants come to each session with a positive attitude and a willingness to challenge themselves. These expectations were listed in the seminar's syllabus.

Postulate 2 states that "regardless of its object, involvement occurs on a continuum; that is different students manifest different degrees of involvement in a given object, and the same student manifests different degrees of involvement in different

objects at different times" (p. 519). Participating in the seminar brought a different kind of involvement to the participants' experience as college athletes. In the first session, I asked study participants if they had attended any of the ARC's workshops or seminars, and only a few people raised their hands. As I explained previously, the participants in my exploratory cycles of research shared that as college athletes, they were not involved in activities outside of academics and sports. By participating in the Leadership for Social Change seminar, the study participants were able to experience a different kind of involvement than they normally engage in.

The third postulate of the theory is that "involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features" (p. 519). The seminar featured quantitative components of involvement including the number of seminar sessions and the length of time of each session. The seminar promoted qualitative features of involvement through its activities, asking participants to reflect on what leadership means to them and asking them how they can apply what they learned in the seminar to their lives.

The fourth postulate states that "the amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program" (p. 519). The Leadership for Social Change seminar promoted involvement by being a high-quality program with a carefully developed curriculum that promotes leadership skills and the importance of social change. Along with the carefully developed curriculum, as the facilitator I am a staff member that has expertise with the content of the seminar and student development.

The fifth and last postulate of the theory explains that "the effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that practice to increase student involvement" (p. 519). As I explained in the discussion about the first postulate, the Leadership for Social Change seminar worked to increase student involvement by providing the participants with a way to be involved with an educationally purposeful activity outside of sports and academics. By participating in the seminar, the participants were able to explore the topics of leadership and social change. Participating in the seminar also gave them the opportunity to apply the skills they have learned as athletes (critical thinking, decision making) to other areas. Lastly, by participating in the seminar study participants were able to engage with a professional staff member outside of athletics that can hopefully become a part of their support network.

Validation Theory

In Rendon's Validation Theory, "validation refers to the intentional, proactive affirmation of students by in- and out-of-class agents (i.e., faculty, student, and academic affairs staff, family members, peers) in order to: 1) validate students as creators of knowledge and as valuable members of the college learning community and 2) foster personal development and social adjustment" (Linares & Munoz, 2011, p. 12). In Validation Theory, the onus of taking the first step to promote student involvement and validate students as important members of their college community, is on institutional agents. Institutional agents can be faculty, administrators, staff, and others. Rendon (2002) explains that "validation theory poses that college faculty, counselors, and administrative staff take a proactive role in reaching out to students to affirm them as

being capable of doing academic work and to support them in their academic endeavors and social adjustment" (p. 645). The theory also recognizes that "while college involvement is a desired activity" (p. 13), for students of color and those who are the first in their families to attend college, "institutional validation can be the key to attaining success in college" (p. 13). There are six elements to Validation Theory (p. 17-18):

- The responsibility for initiating contact with students [is] on institutional agents such as faculty, advisers, coaches, lab assistants, and counselors
- When validation is present students feel capable of learning and have a sense of self-worth
- Validation is likely a prerequisite for student development
- Validation can occur in and out of class
- Validation should not be viewed as an end, but rather as a developmental process which begins early and can continue over time
- Validation is most critical when administered early in the college experience

Validation occurs in two ways: academic and interpersonal (Linares & Munoz, 2011). Academic validation occurs when institutional agents proactively support students to "trust their innate capacity to learn and acquire confidence in being a college student" (Rendon, 1994, p. 40). There are a number of ways that instructors can validate students in the classroom environment. Linares & Munoz (2011) list "inviting guest speakers and exposing students to individuals who come from backgrounds similar to the students" as a way to "create learning experiences that affirm the real possibility that students can be successful" (p. 18). Academic validation can also occur outside of the classroom in the

form peer support like study groups (Rendon, 1994). Interpersonal validation "occurs when in- and out-of-class agents take action to foster students' personal development and social adjustment" (Linares & Munoz, 2011, p. 19). Interpersonal validation can also occur both inside and outside of the classroom. In the classroom, interpersonal validation is demonstrated when "the instructor affirms students as persons, not just as students" (p. 19). An example of interpersonal validation in the classroom is instructors learning students' names. Outside of the classroom, interpersonal validation occurs when validating agents other than faculty establish personal connections with students (Rendon, 2002). Whether academic or interpersonal, "validating actions should be authentic, caring, and nonpatronizing" (Linares & Munoz, 2011, p. 18) to impact personal growth and development.

When considering Validation Theory as it relates to college athletes, it is important to see coaches and other members of the athletic department staff as out-of-class agents that can help to validate college athletes as capable members of the college learning community and not just athletes. Engagement with athletic department staff has a significant impact on the academic success of college athletes (Rankin et. al., 2016). Faculty members are also important validating agents for college athletes (Jolly 2008). In using Validation Theory, a study on NCAA Division I football players found that "student-athletes who are the first in their family to attend college are more likely to perceive faculty members as encouraging them to plan for a career after sports" (Traynowicz, et al, 2016). Based on my own experience as a higher education professional, I would add that professional staff members from across campus, not just from the athletics department, can also serve as validating agents for college athletes.

Academic advisors, career counselors, and others staff members that work in student support services can help college athletes apply the skills they have developed as athletes to other aspects of their lives.

A study on Black women at predominately White institutions (PWIs) found that due to "their multiple intersecting identities Black women undergraduate students have unique experiences at PWIs" (Kelly et al, 2019, p. 4). The study found that Black women benefited from validation through faculty and staff that advocated for them by helping them work through challenges the students encountered. The study also found that Black women undergraduates benefitted from validation through "institutional programs the university provided for historically marginalized students" (p. 14).

College athletes also possess multiple intersecting identities that influence their college experience, and can benefit from in and out of class validating agents that serve as advocates in helping them to navigate not only institutional policies and procedures but also NCAA policies and practices. Jolly (2008) explains that college athletes can benefit from faculty members being "proactive in reaching out to student-athletes and assisting them in overcoming their challenges" (p. 149). College athletes can also benefit from the validation that comes from participating in targeted programs that support students in graduate school and/or career preparation.

Linares & Munoz (2011) explain that "Validation Theory provides a framework that faculty and staff can employ to work with students in a way that gives them agency, affirmation, self-worth, and liberation from past invalidation" (p. 17). The curriculum of the Leadership for Social Change seminar was designed to give participants agency,

affirmation, self-worth, and liberation by helping them explore their identities and interests and formulate creative ideas to improve social issues. The seminar utilized a curriculum that allowed participants to "reflect on their own backgrounds" and "witness themselves in what they are reading and learning" which are both forms of validation (p. 19). Validation theory was also incorporated through the seminar facilitator. As a university staff member, I served as an institutional validation agent by working to "actively affirm and support students on a consistent basis" throughout the seminar (p. 18).

Traynowicz et al (2016) used Validation Theory to examine the impact of race and college generation (whether they are the first in their family to attend college) on "student-athletes' academic, social, and athletic self-perceptions" (p. 22). The participants in the study were members of NCAA Division I football teams. One of the study's findings was that the participants that were first-generation students engaged more with faculty and peers than the non-first-generation participants. The study also found that a validating environment can result in college athletes having relationships with faculty and better connection between college athletes and non-athletes. As a result of the study, the authors recommended that "faculty and other stakeholders such as coaches should receive systematic training with respect to strategies aimed at validating students so that these administrators are able to develop a validating campus culture based on the strengths and needs of culturally diverse student-athlete populations" (p. 29).

Astin's Student Involvement Theory and Rendon's Validation Theory have frequently been used in studies related to the experience of college students. In using these theoretical perspectives to frame my research on the personal growth and development of college athletes, I hope to contribute to the growing body of work on college athletes and the things that promote their personal growth and development.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

In Chapter 2, I presented the theories used to frame this dissertation study, and to provide guidance for the design of the Leadership for Social Change seminar; Astin's Student Involvement Theory and Rendon's Validation Theory. I also reviewed the literature on the college athlete experience to provide research-based support for the need for this study. In Chapter 3, I outline the overall research design of the dissertation study. I describe the study setting, participants, and detail the implemented innovation. In this chapter, I also describe my role as the researcher, explain the data sources, data collection, and methods of analysis.

This study focused on a problem of practice related to the college experience of NCAA Division I college athletes; the lack of college athlete involvement in high-impact practice activities. The purpose of this action research study was to examine the impact that participating in the Leadership for Social Change seminar had on the personal growth and development of NCAA Division I college athletes.

Sequential Mixed Methods

For this study, I employed a sequential mixed methods research design. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007; as cited in Ivankova, 2015) define mixed methods research as "research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry" (p. 5). In using a mixed methods

research design, I was able to utilize the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

There are several approaches or models to mixed methods research designs. For this dissertation study, the sequential explanatory research design was utilized (Quan →Qual MMAR). In the sequential Quan→Qual design quantitative data is collected and analyzed and is then used to inform the qualitative study strand. Ivankova (2015) explains that this research study design uses "follow-up qualitative data to elaborate, explain, or confirm initial quantitative results" (p. 158). I selected this research design to connect the pre- and post-seminar survey results to the post-seminar interviews. (All instruments used in the study are described in detail in the Instruments and Data Collection Resources section of this chapter). In following this approach, I first collected quantitative data (pre- and post-seminar survey results and seminar attendance) and then collected qualitative data (field notes and post-seminar interviews). The seminar attendance was used to determine which participants were eligible to be interviewed. Participants who attended a minimum of 3 seminar sessions were eligible to participate in the post-seminar interviews. The data collected from the post-seminar interviews were used to elaborate on and explain the data collected from the surveys.

Setting

This dissertation study took place during the fall 2022 quarter at the University of California, Riverside (UC Riverside). UC Riverside is 1 of 10 University of California campuses. It has a student population of nearly 27,000 students, with approximately 23,000 undergraduate students and 4,000 graduate students. Approximately 52% of the

student population identifies as female and about 48% identifies as male. Close to 41% of the undergraduate population identifies as low-income and about 55% of the undergraduate population are the first in their families to attend college. The ethnic composition of the student population for the 2021-2022 academic year was as follows: 38% Chicano/Latino, 32% Asian, 13% White, 8% International, 5% two or more races, 3% Black/African American, 2% Domestic Unknown, < 1% Pacific Islander, < 1% Native American.

UC Riverside is a NCAA Division I member institution, with about 300 college athletes competing in 15 men's and women's sports. The sports teams include men's and women's basketball, cross-country/track and field, golf, soccer, among others. UC Riverside's intercollegiate athletic program is a part of the Big West Conference. The Big West Conference is comprised of 11 institutions and is considered a mid-major athletic conference. Mid-major conferences are considered "highly competitive athletics without the depth of the Power 5 [conferences]" (Torch College Recruiting, 2022). Other mid-major conferences are Mountain West, Ivy League, and Sun Belt. Big West Conference institutions include the University of Hawaii, California State University, Fullerton, and California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

Participants

The dissertation study participants were college athletes from UC Riverside's intercollegiate athletic program. The study was open to all athletes in the intercollegiate program however, most of the participants were members of UC Riverside's Student Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC). SAAC is comprised of representatives from each intercollegiate sports team. SAAC's mission is to "Provide and enhance the academic and

athletic experience for the student-athlete. Promote a good relationship between students, faculty, and staff through community awareness communication" (University of California, Riverside Athletics, 2009). The SAAC members were purposefully selected to participate in the study. The Student Athlete Academic Services staff shared the flyer promoting the study with athletes and coaches (Appendix A). Purposeful sampling is when "researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon" (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Within purposeful sampling, there are various strategies. One of these strategies is typical sampling. With typical sampling, "the researcher studies a person or site that is 'typical' to those unfamiliar with the situation" (p. 208). Working with the SAAC members helped me develop a detailed understanding of the college athlete experience at UC Riverside. Since the members of SAAC are from across the intercollegiate sports teams at UC Riverside, they represent a typical athlete in the program.

There were 31 college athletes and me as the action researcher in the seminar. The participants were members of the following sports teams: cross-country, track & field, softball, baseball, basketball, volleyball, tennis, soccer, and golf. Eighteen of the participants identified as female (58%) and 13 identified as male (42%). The participants ranged in age from 18 to 21 with the average age being about 20 years old (19.77). In the participant group, there were 5 freshmen, 6 sophomores, 10 juniors, 9 seniors, and 1 graduate student. Like the overall student population, the participant group was ethnically diverse. The ethnic composition of the participant group was as follows: 10% Chicano/Latino, 19% Asian, 42% White, 6% Black/African American, 23% two or more races.

Role of Researcher

Previously, I explained that this dissertation study served as the culmination of an action research project. In action research, practitioners conduct research with the goal of addressing "local-level problems with the anticipation of finding immediate solutions" (Mertler, 2020, p. 14). For this study, I served as a practitioner-researcher. Being the Director of the Academic Resource Center (ARC) at UC Riverside has allowed me to observe college athletes' lack of engagement in the ARC's services that promote holistic development (workshops, seminars, etc.). Facilitating one of the ARC's seminars for a cohort of athletes served as an immediate solution for this issue.

As the facilitator of the seminar, I participated in the study as an observer and researcher. As the seminar facilitator, I guided the participants through the curriculum, engaging in the activities and discussions. In my role as researcher in the study, I reviewed relevant literature, conducted exploratory cycles of research, designed the study, and recruited participants. As an observer, I adopted a changing observational role. According to Creswell & Guetterman (2019) "a changing observational role is one where researchers adapt their role to the situation" (p. 215). I adopted this role since being the seminar facilitator required that I sometimes participate in the activities. For example, I participated in the ice breaker activity during the first session when we all introduced ourselves. However, I did not participate in the small group activities throughout the seminar.

As an observer and researcher, I recorded descriptive and reflective field notes that detailed the seminar activities and participants. My field notes also include my personal thoughts, insights, and themes that emerged (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). In

my role on campus as the Director of the ARC, in and out of the seminar I served as a professional resource for the participants outside of the athletics department, by sharing information with them about campus programs and resources. I have also started to develop relationships with some of the participants after the seminar by emailing them just to check in and say hello from time to time, as well as continuing to share campus resources. Comeaux et al (2011) shared that "such efforts can cultivate meaningful relationships between student-athletes and student affairs practitioners, and ultimately, lead to positive gains in general academic self-concept for student-athletes" (p. 46).

Innovation

The innovation for this dissertation study was a seminar focused on developing leadership skills and the importance of social change, the Leadership for Social Change seminar. The format and structure of the seminar was adapted from the Leadership for Social Change seminar offered at the University of California, San Diego. The curriculum was introduced to the Academic Resource Center (ARC) at UC Riverside in 2016. The seminar incorporates activities that promote the personal growth and development of participants. Through various activities and discussions, participants explored their own identities and values while learning about the impact of leadership on social change issues.

The Leadership for Social Change seminar is a 5-session series designed to teach students skills to communicate in a leadership setting effectively and confidently. The seminar curriculum consists of both leadership theory and application. The curriculum is based on Helen Astin's (1996) Social Change Model. In the Social Change Model,

"values demand a conscious focus…leadership ought to bring about a desirable social change" and "leadership is a process and not a position" (p. 5). The Social Change Model is based on seven core values referred to as the "Seven Cs of Change" (p. 6). The "Seven Cs" are:

- Consciousness of Self – knowledge of yourself; self-awareness
- Congruence – thinking, feeling, and behaving with consistency, genuineness, authenticity, and honesty toward others
- Commitment – intensity and duration in relation to a person, idea, or activity
- Collaboration – viewing leadership as a group process
- Common Purpose – when people work with others within a shared set of values and aims
- Controversy with Civility – recognizes that differences in viewpoint are inevitable and valuable and that differences must be aired openly and with respect and courtesy
- Citizenship – the process whereby the self is responsibly connected to the environment and the community

During each 50-minute session, study participants engaged in activities designed to develop leadership, interpersonal communication, and public speaking skills. Table 1 provides brief descriptions of the seminar topics and sessions. The session topics included group values, individual values, and community/society values. The seminar topics and activities served to help participants develop a sense of integrity and clarify their values. The seminar topics and activities were also selected to teach participants

about the effects of individual behavior on not only themselves, but others. The seminar topics also addressed the importance of self-awareness, vision, and authenticity, in organizational commitment and satisfaction. Participants were required to attend a minimum of 3 sessions to receive a certificate of completion and a brief seminar summary that they can include on their co-curricular transcripts and/or LinkedIn profiles. The seminar culminated with a collaborative assignment.

Table 1

Leadership for Social Change Seminar Session Topics

Seminar Topic	**Description**
Session 1: Overview	Activities: Ice breaker, leadership brainstorm, Seven Cs brainstorm This session was designed to demonstrate interpersonal validation by introducing the participants to the facilitator through an ice breaker. Astin's Social Change Model was also introduced to establish the foundation for seminar. This session was also used to get participants to consider their thoughts surrounding leadership.

Session 2: Group Values	Activity: Zombie Apocalypse This session covered the concepts of collaboration, common purpose, and controversy with civility. The goal of this session was to teach participants how to work effectively in groups which are diverse in their composition to formulate creative ideas, solutions, or other aims. The activity in this session required that the participants listen to and consider each other's ideas to make decisions. It encouraged the participants to actively listen to each other and display supportive behavior that validated their peers.
Session 3: Individual Values	Activity: Values Sort This session focused on consciousness of self, congruence, and commitment. Participants were able to clarify their values through this session's activity. They were also able to practice self-awareness evaluate their priorities.
Session 4: Community/Society Values	Activity: Action Continuum Exploration Citizenship was the topic for this session. Participants explored group and community contexts. Participants learned about the Action Continuum to help them to see themselves as capable of taking steps toward social change.

Session 5: Presentations/Close Out	Activity: Participant presentations The last session allowed participants to synthesize and apply all that they learned in the seminar to a social change issue they found important. The participants gave presentations on social issues. The presentations gave participants "personal and intellectual voice" in the space and validates "the value of students' personal voice" (Rendon, 2002, p. 654).

Instruments and Data Collection Resources

To examine the impact of the Leadership for Social Change seminar on the personal growth and development of NCAA Division I college athletes, I explored the following research questions to frame my dissertation study:

1. How does participating in a leadership seminar impact college athletes' personal growth and development?
2. How does participating in the Leadership for Social Change seminar help to validate college athletes as valuable members of their college community outside of their athletic identity?

I utilized both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools to explore the study's research questions. To collect quantitative data, I administered the Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS)-II (Appendix A) as both a pre- and post-seminar survey to study participants to measure their personal growth. I utilized observations and interviews as tools to collect qualitative data.

PGIS-II.

The PGIS-II was developed by Christine Robitschek. It is a valid and reliable instrument that measures intentional personal growth. The survey features a 6-point Likert scale with the following response choices: *0 = Disagree Strongly, 1 = Disagree Somewhat, 2 = Disagree a Little, 3 = Agree a Little, 4 = Agree Somewhat, 5 = Agree Strongly.* The instrument has 16 items and includes 4 subscales: Readiness for Change, Planfulness, Using Resources, and Intentional Behavior (Robitschek et al, 2012). Items from the PGIS-II include, "I can tell when I am ready to make specific changes in myself" and "I take every opportunity to grow as it comes up". I selected the PGIS-II because it is a cross-sectional survey design that measures personal growth. A cross-sectional survey design is the most appropriate tool to measure the participants' "current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or practices" (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 386).

Observations

Observation is the "process of observing and recording events, situations, behaviors, and interactions of people in natural settings to explore individuals' experiences with the studied issue" (Ivankova, 2015, p. 203). As I previously explained, I utilized a changing observational role and utilized descriptive and reflective field notes to record my observations. My field notes detailed the activities and participants during the seminar sessions and included my personal thoughts, insights, and themes that emerge (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The descriptive field notes included data on how the participants were seated (usually near their teammates), the discussions during the sessions and how the participants engaged with the activities. While the reflective field

notes included my thoughts on how I applied the theoretical frameworks throughout the seminar and other ideas and insights that emerged during the innovation

Post-Innovation Interviews

I also utilized interviews to collect qualitative data. Creswell & Guetterman (2019) explain that during interviews, "researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers" (p. 217). During the fourth and fifth seminar sessions, I invited participants that attended 3 or more sessions to sign up to be interviewed. Six participants volunteered to participate in the post-innovation interviews. I interviewed all 6 participants that volunteered. The participants that were interviewed ranged from first year to fourth year athletes and were members of various athletic teams; men's and women's cross-country and track and field, men's tennis, women's volleyball, and women's soccer. The interviews were conducted via Zoom which was also used to record and automatically transcribe the interviews.

The interview questions included background questions regarding the sport the participant plays and the number of years they have participated in sports. There were open-ended questions including, "After completing the Leadership for Social Change Seminar, in what ways do you think you can contribute to the campus community?" Open-ended questions were utilized "so that participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher" (p. 218). I also utilized the interviews to gather information that I was not able to observe during the seminar sessions.

Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative Analysis Procedures

Sixteen of the 31 participants completed both the pre- and post-seminar survey, and so were included in the analyses of survey data. To analyze the survey data, I calculated the total mean score from the PGIS-II "by summing the subscale scores and then dividing by 4 (i.e., the number of subscales)" (MIDSS, 2022) for the pre- and post-surveys for each of the 16 participants. I also calculated the mean score for each of the subscales. To measure the difference in the means, I entered the survey data into SPSS and ran the Repeated-Measures t-Test. The Repeated-Measures t-Test is used to "determine the statistical significance of the difference between two measures (i.e. variables) on the same group" (Ross, 2021). The Repeated-Measures t-Test was used to determine the difference between the means of the pre- and post-surveys of the same group of participants.

Qualitative Analysis Procedures

I began the process of analyzing the qualitative data by listening to the post-innovation interviews and comparing the audio to the auto-transcript. I then corrected the errors made by the auto-transcription and read through my field notes from the seminar.

Grounded theory strategy was used to analyze the qualitative data. Charmaz (2014) describes a two-phase process to coding, "an initial phase involving naming each word, line, or segment of data followed by a focused, selective phase that uses the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amounts of data" (p. 113). Initial coding was used for the first phase. Saldaña (2021)

explains that initial coding is an elemental coding method. Elemental coding methods are used “to build a foundation for future coding cycles” (p. 364). I decided to use initial coding as the first approach due to its open-ended nature. Saldaña explains that initial coding is “a first-cycle, open-ended approach to coding the data with some recommended general guidelines” (p. 148). Conducting initial coding allowed me to “remain open to exploring whatever theoretical possibilities we can discern in the data” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 116). Using initial coding as my first approach also allowed me to compare the interviews and field notes for similarities and differences.

To transition to the second cycle of coding, I used code mapping. The purpose of code mapping is to better structure and categorize the data. In the first iteration of code mapping the codes from the first cycle are extracted and listed randomly. I listed all the codes that I identified from the initial coding approach. In the second iteration of code mapping, the codes are then grouped into categories. I grouped the codes into four categories: affirming, leadership/leadership skills, contribution to campus community, and the knowledge/experiences of others. I used pattern coding as the second cycle coding method. Saldaña explains that second cycle cumulative coding methods like pattern coding synthesize the work from the first cycle of coding and builds on the first codes to “integrate them into richer, condensed forms of meaning” (p. 321). I chose pattern coding as the second cycle of coding to better organize and explain the qualitative data.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The purpose of this dissertation study was to examine the impact that participating in the "Leadership for Social Change" seminar had on the personal growth and development of NCAA Division I college athletes at UC Riverside. In this chapter I present an analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data that was collected, as well as the study's findings. The analysis and findings are presented according to each research question:

1. How does participating in a leadership seminar impact college athletes' personal growth and development?
2. How does participating in the Leadership for Social Change seminar help to validate college athletes as valuable members of their college community outside of their athletic identity?

The quantitative data from this dissertation study was collected through the Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS)-II. The qualitative data was collected through descriptive and reflective field notes from my observations throughout the innovation, and through post-innovation interviews. Only participants that completed both the pre- and post-innovation survey have been included in the analysis (N=16). All the participant names mentioned in the results are pseudonyms.

Research Question 1

The first research question examined the impact that participating in the "Leadership for Social Change" had on the personal growth and development of college

athletes. To examine this question, the PGIS-II was used as a pre- and post-seminar survey, and qualitative data was used to elaborate on the survey results. The PGIS-II is "multidimensional, including cognitive and behavioral factors" (Robitschek, et al, 2012, p. 276). The PGIS-II measures personal growth initiative overall and the dimensions of personal growth; Readiness for Change, Planfulness, Using Resources, and Intentional Behavior. For each of the 16 items on the survey, participants responded on a six-point scale from "Disagree Strongly" to "Agree Strongly".

I administered the pre-seminar PGIS-II before the start of the first seminar session, and the post-seminar PGIS-II during the last seminar session. The participants completed the pre- and post-seminar surveys in a "paper and pencil" format. Participants were also asked for demographic information including age, gender, race/ethnicity, class standing (year in college), and athletic team affiliation. For confidentiality purposes, participants were asked to create a unique identifier for the pre- and post-seminar surveys so that the scores could be compared. The pre- and post-seminar survey results and demographic information were uploaded to a Microsoft Excel sheet where I calculated the total mean scores for each participant and the total mean score of the group. I also calculated subscale scores for each participant and the group.

Survey Results

The average total mean score for the participants' pre-innovation survey was 3.67 (SD=0.64). Regarding the subscale scores, "Using Resources" had the lowest average of all the subscales (M=2.92, SD=1.10) while "Intentional Behavior" had the highest subscale score (M=4.20). The group total mean score for the post-innovation survey

increased to 3.97 (SD=0.39). “Using Resources” remained the lowest scoring subscale, however the score increased to M=3.65 (SD=.70). “Intentional Behavior” also remained the highest scoring subscale (M=4.23, SD=0.39). The pre- and post-innovation survey results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Pre- and Post-Innovation Survey Results

	M (Pre)	SD (Pre)	M (Post)	SD (Post)
Total Mean Score	3.67	0.64	3.97	0.39
Readiness for Change	3.69	0.64	3.91	0.42
Planfulness	3.88	0.77	4.08	0.55
Using Resources	2.92	1.11	3.65	0.7
Intentional Behavior	4.20	0.59	4.23	0.39

Pre- and Post-Innovation Survey Comparison

The Repeated-Measures t-Test was run in SPSS to determine the difference between the means of the pre- and post-innovation survey scores of the participants. There was an increase in the post-innovation total mean score and the subscale scores compared to the pre-innovation scores. Though the total mean score for the post-

innovation survey was .29 points higher than the pre-innovation survey, the difference was not statistically significant (t_{15}=1.61, p >.05), with a medium effect size (d=.40). There was also no statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-seminar scores for 3 of the 4 subscales. The subscale score for "Using Resources" was .73 points higher on the post-seminar survey compared to the score for this subscale on the pre-seminar survey. The difference in scores for the “Using Resources” subscale was statistically significant (t_{15}=3.01, p<.05), with a medium effect size (d=.75).

The survey results indicate that study participants significantly (t_{15}=3.01, p<.05) improved in the using resources aspect of personal growth and development after completing the Leadership for Social Change seminar. This indicates that after completing the seminar, participants improved in personal growth and development related to asking for help when trying to change themselves, using resources when trying to grow, and actively seeking out help when trying to change. The effect size indicates that there was a moderate difference in the group before and after the seminar.

The data collected from the observations during the seminar elaborates on the survey data collected on the “Using Resources” subscale. The final project for the seminar served to teach participants how to utilize resources to prepare presentations. The participants had to effectively use resources to research their topics and prepare comprehensive presentations that incorporated the seminar’s curriculum. As described in the seminar syllabus, the participants made 3-5-minute presentations on a social change issue/topic that was important to them using the following guidelines:

1) Choose an issue or topic related to a community or social change that you are passionate about. Why did you choose this particular topic?

2) Briefly discuss the most important and current aspects of this topic/issue.

3) Describe what level of action you have currently undertaken on this issue in reference to the Action Continuum

4) Showcase 2 resources (such as organizations, websites, articles, etc.) that educate and/or work for social change for this particular issue.

5) Looking ahead, what personal commitment(s) are you willing to make to work for social change on this issue? Use the Action Continuum as a guide.

The participants' presentations covered a variety of topics. One group presented on poverty among college students. They discussed the prevalence of food insecurity among college students and shared campus and community resources (R'Pantry, CalFresh) that support students in getting food. One of the participants shared tips on applying for CalFresh and talked about their own experience with the program. Another group presented on LGBTQ+ rights. They included information about current events such as the Club Q shooting in Colorado and the anti-LGBTQ+ practices in Qatar during the World Cup. There was also a presentation on the Name, Image, Likeness (NIL) rules in the NCAA. The presentation discussed pros and cons of the new NIL rules including athletes being able to have corporate sponsorships (pro) and the opportunity for boosters to pay players (con). Another group presented on climate change. They discussed the importance of addressing climate change and the use of technology in addressing climate issues. All of the groups effectively utilized resources from the seminar and other sources to present on their topics.

The data collected from the post-innovation interviews also expands on the survey data collected surrounding the "Using Resources" subscale. In response to the question, "Reflecting on all that you learned in the seminar, what is one takeaway from the seminar that you can apply to your current college experience or to the future?", Timothy, a third-year student and member of the cross-country and track and field teams explained how the Values Sort list that was a part of session 3 was a useful resource that helped him to identify what is important to him:

> I think I discussed this during the seminar after we talked about the values, but definitely prioritizing my values. Because my highest value is family, but I definitely don't spend as much time, or put enough time on the side for them. So it's definitely opened my eyes. I like, I'll call my mom more often than I would. I've gone home a couple of times since then. So it definitely helped you realize what kind of values you do have. Because like, I mean, before I got the list of values. It's like, okay, what am I? What are my values? I can't even think of that, you know. But like being able to pick and choose what is important to you, definitely helped like direct uh, I think how I'm going to spend like some of my time in the future for college, and like trying to prioritize what's important to me.

Another participant also mentioned using resources in her interview. Zoe, a second-year student and member of the women's soccer team shared, "I think the seminar helps me in the sense of just knowing that I have a lot more resources that are available to me." Zoe went on to discuss how the seminar itself served as a resource that helped her to be able

to identify the characteristics of a good leader, "…kind of recognizing like I knew what a good leader looked like, but I guess now I can kind of pinpoint why."

The LSC Seminar and Personal Growth & Development

The data collected from the pre- and post-innovation survey indicate that participating in the Leadership for Social Change seminar appeared to have a significant impact on the aspect of personal growth and development related to using resources. The qualitative data collected from field notes and post-innovation interviews supported the quantitative data by highlighting participants' use of resources to prepare for their presentations, and participants' access to resources to support their personal growth and development through the seminar like the values list that was utilized for the values clarification activity in session 3 and the seminar overall.

Research Question 2

The second research question examined how participating in the Leadership for Social Change seminar helped to validate college athletes as valuable members of their college community outside of their athletic identity. The results used to examine this question were based on the analysis of the qualitative data collected during the study: descriptive and reflective field notes, and post-innovation interviews.

In conducting the analysis of the qualitative data sources, I identified several codes during the initial coding process. After the initial coding process, I used code mapping as a transition process to identify four categories: affirming, leadership/leadership skills, contribution to campus community, and knowledge/experiences. Using the categories that emerged from code mapping, I utilized

pattern coding to condense the categories that emerged from the transition process. Through the process of pattern coding, I identified the final Pattern Code for the qualitative data that was collected: Interpersonal Validation. I have provided a detailed description of each seminar session and how interpersonal validation was used to affirm participants throughout the seminar. I have also provided data from the post-innovation interviews to further elaborate how interpersonal validation served to validate the participants as valuable members of their college community outside of their athletic identity.

Session 1: Introduction and Overview

Session 1 of the seminar focused on introducing the participants to each other and to me (the facilitator). The first seminar session was also used to provide an overview of the seminar and introduce participants to Astin's (1996) Social Change Model of Leadership; "The Seven Cs of Change".

During the first session study participants introduced themselves through an ice breaker. Each participant wrote their name on one side of an index card and on the other side 4 pictures, words or symbols that described them. I demonstrated the activity by having my own index card prepared to share. I introduced myself by name then explained each of my symbols. One of my symbols was a music note, and I shared that I love music and singing. After demonstrating the activity, I asked the participants to form small groups with people around them, and share their names and the 4 pictures, words, or symbols that describe them with their group members. After the small groups completed the activity, I asked the participants if anyone wanted to share with the entire group and a few participants shared their descriptions with the entire group. A participant shared that

one of the symbols represented her nickname. Another participant shared that one of the symbols represented the sport he plays.

The ice breaker activity served two purposes. The first purpose was to introduce the participants and the facilitator to each other. The other purpose of the activity was to affirm and validate the participants' identities outside of being athletes. Linares and Munoz (2011) found that learning their names can be a validating experience for students (p. 15). Starting to learn the participants' names in the first session helped to demonstrate my interest in the participants. Hurtado et al (2011) explain that "validation occurs when an individual within an institution takes an active interest in students" (p. 55).

After the ice breaker activity, I asked the participants to think about the word leadership and to write down the words and characteristics that come to mind on the Post-Its I distributed to them. After giving the group a few minutes to complete the activity, I told them to hold on to their Post-Its because they would be using them later. I then moved on to explain "The Seven Cs of Change".

As I previously stated, the Leadership for Social Change seminar is designed to help students develop their leadership, interpersonal, and communication skills. With its emphasis on social change, the seminar also emphasizes a commitment to inclusion and social justice. The curriculum of the seminar is based on Astin's Social Change Model. In the Social Change Model, "values demand a conscious focus…leadership ought to bring about a desirable social change" and "leadership is a process and not a position" (Astin, 1996, p. 5). As part of the first session, participants were introduced to the "Seven Cs of Change" from the Social Change Model. They are (p. 6):

- Consciousness of Self – knowledge of yourself; self-awareness

- Congruence – thinking, feeling, and behaving with consistency, genuineness, authenticity, and honesty toward others
- Commitment – intensity and duration in relation to a person, idea, or activity
- Collaboration – viewing leadership as a group process
- Common Purpose – when people work with others within a shared set of values and aims
- Controversy with Civility – recognizes that differences in viewpoint are inevitable and valuable and that differences must be aired openly and with respect and courtesy
- Citizenship – the process whereby the self is responsibly connected to the environment and the community

After giving an overview of each "C", I broke the participants up into 7 groups (one for each C). I noticed that the participants were sitting with their teammates. To get them to be in groups with people other than their teammates, I asked them to "number off" 1 through 7. I then asked each group number to get together. Each group was then assigned one of the "Cs". I asked each group to discuss why their "C" is important to leadership. One response I found especially interesting came from the "Consciousness of Self" group. This group shared that consciousness of self is important to leadership because, "how can you lead if you don't know who you are?"

To help the participants further apply the "Seven Cs of Change", I hung signs around the room with each "C" and its definition written on them. I asked the participants to get their "Post-It" where they wrote down the word or phrase they associate with leadership. I then asked them to go around the room and read the definitions for each of

the “Cs” and place their “Post-It” on the sign of the “C” that most closely aligns with the word or phrase that they wrote down. Below I have included some of the words and phrases the participants put for each “C”:

- Consciousness of Self – “Responsible”, “Reliable”, “Does whatever it takes”, “A person that is selfless, and who wants the best for everyone”
- Congruence – “Role Model”, “Integrity”, “Trustworthy”, “Reliable”
- Commitment – “Helping”, “Accountability”, “Action”, “Taking Risks”, “Taking Responsibility”
- Collaboration – “Teamwork”, “Interpersonal”, “Asks for help”, “Delegates”
- Common Purpose – “Vision”, “Passion”, “Mentors”, “Greater Good”
- Controversy with Civility – “Trustworthy”
- Citizenship – None of the participants put their words/phrases on this sign

During the activity, one of the participants told me that he didn’t think that the words and phrases aligned with any of the “Cs”. I asked him if he wanted to share the words and phrases he wrote with me. The participant shared that one of his phrases was “Leaders eat last”. I told him that I think that means that leaders put the needs of the group before their own individual needs and asked him if that was what the phrase meant to him, and he agreed. We had a brief discussion about how knowing that as a leader your individual needs are secondary to the group’s takes a level of self-awareness. The participant then decided that his phrases most closely aligned with “Consciousness of Self”.

After placing their leadership words and phrases on each sign, I asked the participants to walk around the room and read the leadership words and phrases on each of the signs. After reviewing the words and phrases on each of the signs, I asked the participants how the activity impacted their notions of leadership. Participants shared that the activity added to their perspective of leadership. One participant shared that the activity confirmed that leadership is more than just a title and other participants agreed. To end the session, I summarized the "The Seven Cs of Change" and gave participants a handout with definitions of the "7 Cs". I then asked the participants to observe if and how the "7 Cs" show up in their own leadership or the leadership of others in the following 2 weeks.

The activities of this session applied validation theory by "affirming the value of students' personal voice" (Rendon, 2002, p. 654). Throughout the session the study participants shared their own experiences and thoughts surrounding leadership. They were also able to align their experiences and thoughts about leadership with a theoretical leadership model. This gave the participants "personal and intellectual voice in the classroom [and] allows students to know that the knowledge and experience that they bring to the college classroom are just as important as what others represent and know" (Rendon, 2002, p. 654).

Sessions 2: Group Values

To start the session, I did a "check-in" with the participants. I asked the group how the previous 2 weeks had been for them. Some of the participants shared that they were busy with midterms. I took this time to remind the participants about the free blue books and Scantrons that the ARC had available for students and encouraged them to

utilize tutoring and Supplemental Instruction to help them in preparing for their midterms.

After the "check-in", I gave an overview of the "Seven Cs of Change". I then asked the participants to share how the "7 Cs" showed up in their own leadership or in the leadership of others over the previous 2 weeks. The participants shared the following examples:

- Common Purpose – "The team got together after the meet to talk about what went right and how we can do better next time."
- Commitment – "The team journaled individually about the meet."
- Collaboration – "The team captains got together after the game to discuss the game; what needs to improve & change."

I also shared how "Common Purpose" showed up in my leadership in the prior 2 weeks. I told the participants about a conference I attended where I worked with the group on developing student success initiatives and programming.

The second seminar session focused on the "Cs" collaboration, common purpose, and controversy with civility, which Astin (1996) identifies as group values (p. 6). To teach the participants how to apply these concepts, I facilitated the "Zombie Apocalypse" activity. For this activity I put the participants in groups by having them "number off" 1 – 5, then had each group number get together. Once the participants were in their groups, I gave them the following scenario:

Three days ago, the Zombie Apocalypse broke out around the world, with massive attacks in all heavily populated areas.

Some leaders saw this coming and were able to put 100 children (ages 3-4) from around the globe into cryogenic suspension in a secure compound; in a year, they can be resuscitated and raised after zombie levels become safe again.

Sixteen adults have made it to the compound BUT there is only enough food and supplies to keep EIGHT of them alive until it is safe to leave the compound. The rest must leave the compound immediately and fend for themselves on the outside.

Choose which eight you decide to keep and think about your reasons. These are the only adults around to raise the next generation. Choose carefully.

Along with the scenario, each group was given a list with the "apocalypse players" that included brief descriptions of the 16 adults that they had to choose from. Using this information, each group selected 8 adults allowed to stay in the compound. Below are a few of the "players" from the list:

Jon Ferguson -- Age 29; rabbi. Grew up on a farm.
Rico Enderton -- Age 35; musician (piano, trumpet, drums).
Lashawn Jackson -- Age 41; corporate manager at a grocery store; identical twin of Courtney.
Courtney Jackson -- Age 41; biologist; vegetarian; identical twin of Lashawn.
Adelia Rotel -- Age 29; investment banker; self-made millionaire.

As the participants were doing the activity in their groups, I walked around the room to observe the discussions and answer any questions they may have had. As I walked around the room, the first thing I observed was that each group seemed to approach the discussion in different ways. For example, I gave each group one handout that listed the apocalypse scenario and one handout that listed the names and descriptors. One group had a member of the group read the scenario out loud to their group, and they all passed around the list of the names and descriptors. After reading through the names, they started discussing each person on the list as a group. Another group took the approach of ranking the people on the list individually, then putting their rankings together to see where there was overlap.

I also observed the conversations that the groups were having. Some of the comments I heard from the participants as they were in their groups working to determine which of the players would stay in the compound were:

- “We need someone to teach the kids.”
- “I feel really bad”
- “The other twin will die”
- “Do we need someone religious?”

Once the participants made their selections, the group came back together to discuss their outcomes. I asked each group to share one player that they kept in the compound and one player that they put out of the compound and why. One group chose the 56-year-old woman homemaker to stay in the compound, because they thought that a mother figure was needed to care for the children. In response to this I pointed out that the description didn’t say that she was a mother. I asked the group members if their choice would have been influenced if the description specifically said that she was not a mother. One participant said having that information would have influenced her decision and that she may not have picked the homemaker to stay in the compound. Most of the groups chose to keep the dermatologist in the compound since he had medical training. The groups seemed to be split on whether to keep the investment banker self-made millionaire in the compound. One group said no because the person is probably selfish. Another group said yes because the self-made millionaire will be helpful in starting society over.

After each group shared one player they selected to keep in the compound and one player they selected to leave the compound, I asked the group, “What was the process to selecting the players? How did you all come to consensus?” As I shared

previously, one group shared that each group member ranked the players individually, then they came to a consensus based on their individual rankings. They explained that knew they were going to have differing opinions, so they chose to do it this way. Other groups shared that they discussed how to select the players as a group.

I continued to facilitate the discussion about the activity by asking the participants, "Why was this hard?" One participant shared, "I felt bad having to make a decision about who got to stay." Another participant shared, "We had to make a decision based on just one line of information." Another participant shared, "Everyone had a skill that could be useful, but we couldn't save everyone." Another participant shared, "We had to think about what we would need to start over." I found these responses characteristic of the group conversations I observed. The conversations seemed to center around what each player could do for the compound or contribute to the compound. Based on this, I asked a follow up question; "Is our humanity only determined by our usefulness?" There were a lot of "hmmms" and "ohs" but no definitive responses from the participants.

The next question I posed to the participants was "How does this [activity] relate to leadership?" For this question, I went back to the participant that shared that "we had to make a decision based on one line of information". I shared that sometimes as a leader you must make decisions based on the information that you have at the time which may not be complete. Other participants shared, "You have to hear from other people; get their opinions", "[As a leader] You have to work with others", "As a leader you have to make hard choices. Everyone won't be happy."

To close out the session I brought the conversation back to the group values of the 7 Cs; collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility and asked the group, "How did this exercise connect with the group values?" The responses shared were "We had to collaborate to come up with a list of people", "The common purpose was identifying the people to stay in the compound and to leave", "When there were different opinions, we were civil in discussing it."

Validation Theory was applied as a framework during this session in two different ways. First, the activities served as "opportunities for students to validate each other" (Rendon, 2002, p. 654). Selecting the "players" for the "Zombie Apocalypse" activity required the participants to listen to each other's ideas to make decisions as a group. They had to actively listen to each other and display supportive behavior that validated their peers. To affirm the participants, I encouraged their participation by asking questions that helped to guide the discussions. I did this to ensure that their voices were heard and to validate them as "creators of knowledge" in the space (Linares & Munoz, 2011, p. 12).

Session 3 – Individual Values

I started Session 3 by first checking in with and greeting the participants. The third session of the seminar took place during week 6 of the quarter, which is the end of midterms for most students. I asked the participants how they were feeling as they were getting through midterms. Participants shared that they were tired but think they did okay on their midterms. I reminded the participants that they could pick up free blue books and Scantrons from the ARC.

After checking in with participants, I reviewed Session 2. I reviewed the group values from the 7 Cs and summarized the "Zombie Apocalypse" activity. I highlighted some of the points made by the participants during Session 2's discussions. During the discussion about Session 2 and group values, one of the participants shared how there has been a coaching change with his team. "The previous coach was really strict and valued routine. With the current coach there isn't structure".

After debriefing Session 2, I shared with the participants that while the last session focused on the group values of the 7 Cs, the third session would focus on the personal/individual values of the 7 Cs; consciousness of self, congruence, and commitment. I then reviewed the definitions of these values from the Social Change Model and shared with them some of the words and phrases from Session 1 that they used to describe leadership as it relates to the personal values. Some of the words and phrases the participants stated were accountability, stepping up, captain, helping, taking responsibility, voice, and role model.

I started the discussion about individual/personal values with two questions. First, I asked the participants "What is a value?" One participant shared that a value is, "Something that is important to you". Another participant explained that a value is "Something that defines you, says who you are". When I looked around the room, several of the participants were nodding their heads in agreement with these two statements. The second question I asked was, "Why is it important for leaders to have personal values?" A participant stated, "You have to know who you are to lead". Again, most of the participants nodded in agreement.

The activity for this session was titled “Values Sort”. For this activity, each participant was given a handout with 33 values listed including leadership, education, health, family, etc. There were also 2 blank spaces on the handout in case there were values that they wanted to include that weren’t listed. I asked the participants to read through all the words on the handout, then select the 7 values that are the most important to them. Once all the participants identified 7 values, I asked them, “Why is it important to have values?”. The participants shared, “They give you direction. They guide you”, “If you don’t have values, how do you know what is important to you?”

I then asked the group to eliminate 2 of the 7 values they selected, to leave them with their top 5 values. I then asked them to eliminate 2 more values, to leave them with their top 3 individual values. Every time I asked the group to narrow their choices down, there were groans around the room. Once they identified their top 3, I asked them to rank their top 3 values from most important to least important.

After everyone ranked their top 3 values, I asked the participants questions to guide the discussion. The first question I asked was, “What did you learn from this exercise? One participant shared, “I didn’t think education would make it into my top 3.” Another responded, “Relationships are important to me.” Next, I asked the group, “Was anything surprising or unexpected?” A participant explained, “I kept risk as a top priority. Before I wouldn’t have thought that risk was important to me.” I then asked the group, “How do your top 3 values align with how you see yourself as a leader?” In response to this question, one of the participants talked about honesty. “One of my top values was honesty. If you’re not honest as a leader people won’t trust you and want to follow you.”

I also asked the participants to discuss what was difficult about this activity. Responses to this question included, “There are several things on the sheet that are important to me. It was hard to narrow them down”, “Having to get them down to 3”. The last question I asked the participants was, “Do your top 3 values align with your priorities; the things you make time to do?” This question seemed to give the group pause. There was a longer silence before anyone responded. A participant then shared, “I have family as my top value, but I don’t always talk to then because I get busy. It made me think I should probably do better with talking to them.”

As we were about to wrap up the discussion about values, one of the participants asked, “What if you haven’t achieved what you listed yet?” I asked the participant what he meant. The participant explained, “Well on my list my top 3 are Health, Wealth, and Power. I don’t have them [wealth and power] yet, but I’m working toward it.” I responded to this question by saying, “I think this shows that your values are in alignment with your priorities because you’re working toward achieving the things that you value”. At the end of the discussion, I asked the participants to pay attention to how the values they identified showed up in their lives over the following 2 weeks.

The purpose of the “Values Sort” activity was to validate the identities that the study participants possess outside of their role as college athletes. Having the participants identify what they value the most helped to affirm them as whole people and not just athletes. Also, consciousness of self (one of the Cs of focus for this session) is a more subjective form of knowledge. The activity also served to honor and validate consciousness of self as a subjective form of knowledge (Rendon, 2002).

Session 4 – Societal & Community Values

The fourth seminar session focused on citizenship as a society/community value. In this session the participants were also introduced to the Action Continuum and learned to apply the "Seven Cs" to acting towards change.

I started the session by facilitating a discussion about the previous session's topic, individual/personal values. I asked the participants how the values they identified showed up in their lives since the last session (over the previous 2 weeks). I also asked if anyone made any changes to their priorities based on the values they identified in the last session. One participant shared that in doing the Values Sort activity, he identified that family is his top value, but he doesn't always make time for his family. After the last session, he intentionally made time to go visit with his family. Another participant shared that the values sort activity also helped her to recognize what is important to others. She explained that family is not her top value, but it is her mom's and it is important for her to make time for family because it is important to her mom.

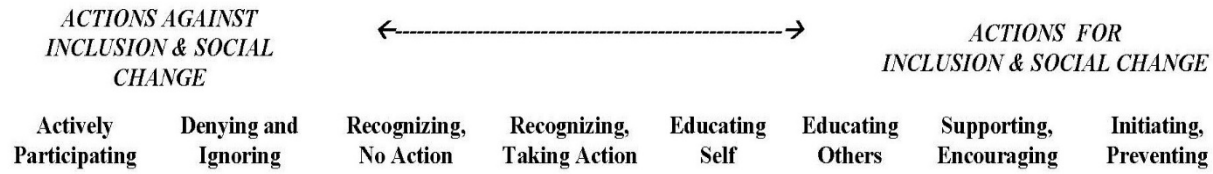
To start the discussion about citizenship as a community value, I reviewed the definition for citizenship from the Social Change model. "Citizenship names the process whereby the self is responsibly connected to the environment and the community. It acknowledges the interdependence of all involved in the leadership effort" (Astin, 1996, p. 7). I then asked the participants a few questions to start the conversation: What are some current events that were happening locally, nationally, and internationally? Why is awareness of current events important? How does being informed about current events relate to citizenship? One of the participants started a discussion about the strike of

academic student employees that was happening on campus (and throughout the UC system). The participant shared that she was supportive of her TAs (Teaching Assistants) and she understood how much they do for them (as students). The participant also explained she understood that she was connected to their cause and the campus community and shared that some of the TAs asked students to not attend class in solidarity with the strike. The participant shared that even though she supports and understands the cause, she really needs to attend class. I thought this was especially interesting. For college athletes, missing class can have consequences that non-athletes won't have. At UC Riverside coaches often do class checks to make sure that athletes are attending. Not attending class can result in disciplinary action (not starting in a game, reduction in playing time, etc.). Also, missing class can result in poor grades which can put athletes' eligibility at risk.

After discussing current events, I introduced the Action Continuum to the group to help synthesize the 7 Cs for change. The Action Continuum is based on the "Racism Curriculum Design" developed by Wijeyesinghe, Griffin, and Love (1997). The continuum moves from actions against social justice and inclusion to actions for diversity and social justice. The continuum is shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1:

Action Continuum



I posted signs around the room with an element of the continuum written on each one. After explaining the Action Continuum, I named 3 to 4 topics (for example, climate issues) and asked the participants to move to the element that best represented the level of action they are taking on that issue. For each issue, I asked the participants to share why they chose that element of the continuum to stand next to. Below are the issues discussed during the activity:

- Global Warming/Climate Issues – Participants ranged between "Recognizing, No Action" and "Supporting, Encouraging". When asked to explain why they chose to stand where they did along the continuum, participants shared that they recycle sometimes. Participants brought up that they participate in SAAC's sustainability campaign. One participant shared that she chose her major (Environmental Science) to have a positive impact on climate issues. Another participant shared that he recognizes that there are climate issues, but doesn't always take action.
- Women's Reproductive Rights – The participants ranged along the continuum again between "Recognizing, No Action" and "Supporting Encouraging". When asked to explain why they chose to stand where they did, one participant that was standing near "Supporting, Encouraging" explained that as a woman she feels that she has to support this cause and that she sometimes gives (monetarily) when she's able to.
- Access to mental health services – Participants stood mostly between "Recognizing, No Action" and "Educating Self". When asked why they chose to stand where they were, some of the responses were "I think it's important, but I'm not sure what to do about it".

- College athletes being paid – I found the response to this issue very interesting. The participants spread out along the entire continuum. When asked about their position on the continuum, one participant was especially vocal. He stood near "Recognizing, No Action". He shared that he recognizes that there is an issue and that something needs to change, but not sure what. He shared that he thinks revenue generating sports team members should get paid differently than non-revenue generating sports. Another participant shared that she stood in between "Educating Self" and "Educating Others". She shared that she wrote a paper about the topic in high school.

To conclude the conversation about the Action Continuum, I facilitated a discussion about leadership and action. I shared with the participants that the purpose of the activity was to demonstrate that change requires acting, and the Action Continuum is a useful model for conceptualizing this. While we may not be able to be on the "Initiating, Preventing" end of the continuum for every cause, we can work toward moving one step forward along the continuum toward inclusion and social justice.

At the end of the session, I addressed the shooting that occurred at the University of Virginia. The day before the fourth session of the seminar, three University of Virginia football players were shot and killed by another student when returning from a class field trip. I shared with the participants that sometimes when things like this happen to people with whom we have shared a life experience or shared identity, it can be especially scary and cause us to feel more deeply about it. I reminded them about the resources available to them on campus (Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Case Management)

if they want to talk to someone. I also shared with them about my son's experience when his coach passed away and he was not referred to campus resources. I explained that I always want to make sure all students know about all the resources available to them.

This session on community/society values continued to create a validating environment for the participants. The session gave participants the opportunity to "explore the connections between their personal histories, group, and community contexts" (Linares & Munoz, 2011, p. 22). The discussion on the Action Continuum gave the participants the opportunity to see themselves as capable of learning how to take steps toward social change.

Session 5 – Wrap-Up & Presentations

The final session of the seminar was held in the Academic Resource Center (ARC) instead of in the Athletics Department (the participants were told about the room change during the previous session and I emailed them a reminder), so that the participants could have access to a projector and audio equipment for their presentations. I projected flyers for the ARC's finals preparation events on the screen so the participants could see the information as they came in and got settled. As the participants were coming into the department, I heard a few of them say "I've never been here before", "This is a whole thing!", "This is my first time here."

I was a little disappointed to hear this especially since the ARC is in the same building as Student Athlete Academic Services and the participants come to the building almost daily for study hall and advising. Considering the comments I overheard, I started the session by welcoming the participants to the ARC and gave an overview of the

services and programs we offer. I then spoke about the upcoming finals preparation events; “Leaves Fall, Grades Don’t” and the “R’Finals Study Jam”. Actively promoting academic support is a critical validating action, especially for “nontraditional students who often feel unentitled to request academic assistance” (Rendon, 2002, p. 654). I saw a few of the participants taking pictures of the flyers on the screen presumably to have so that they could attend. At least one of the study participants attended one of the ARC’s final preparation events.

Before the participants started their presentations, I asked them to complete the post-innovation survey (PGIS-II). After the participants completed the survey, I gave a brief overview of each session and facilitated a brief discussion on the session topics. The participants then gave their presentations. As explained earlier in this chapter, the participants made 3-5-minute presentations on a social change issue/topic that is important to them. Prior to each presentation, I distributed blank notecards to the participants and asked that for each presentation, they write at least one thing they learned or found interesting. At the end of each presentation, I collected the notecards and gave them to the presenting group. After the last presentation, I thanked the group for the presentations. I also thanked them for taking the time to attend the seminar. I shared with them that I know that their time is limited due to their academic and athletic obligations, and I don’t take it lightly that they dedicated time to participating in this seminar.

The last session of the seminar served to validate students in a few ways. Giving the participants the opportunity to present the information that they have learned and researched, validated them as capable learners. Allowing the participants to present as

part of the seminar gave them "personal and intellectual voice" in the space and validated "the value of students' personal voice" (Rendon, 2002, p. 654). The note cards provided encouraging and meaningful feedback to the participants and in this way, the participants again validated each other.

Post-Innovation Interviews. The data collected from the post-innovation interviews also elaborates on how participating in the Leadership for Social Change seminar served to validate college athletes as valuable members of their college community outside of their athletic identity. Throughout the seminar, participants were affirmed as people not just students or athletes (Rendon, 2002). During the seminar sessions, participants' knowledge and experiences were continuously affirmed. Rendon (2002) explains, "giving students personal and intellectual voice in the classroom allows students to know that the knowledge and experiences that they bring to the college classroom are just as important as what others represent and know" (p. 654). When asked if throughout the seminar, did they feel that their knowledge and experiences were just as important as the knowledge and experiences of others, all the participants that were interviewed shared that they did feel as if their knowledge and experiences were just as important as the knowledge and experiences of others. Ryan, a second-year student and member of the men's tennis team said the following:

> I mean, I just say we all had a voice, everyone not just like the board members in SAAC. I think the activities, everyone was open to say whatever they wanted, and everyone was listening, and I think it was a good environment where everyone could speak if they wanted to.

The interviewed participants pointed to various seminar discussions and activities that made them feel that their knowledge and experiences were just as important as the knowledge and experiences as others. This can be seen in the participants' responses when asked what activities or discussion made them feel that their knowledge and experiences were important. Specifically, the participants discussed the examples of activities and discussions where they were able to validate each other:

> Um, for example, the activity where we had to group ourselves, and the continuum thing because it was like kind of felt like a distribution. But everybody was like, kind of, like every opinion kind of mattered. And it didn't really matter where you stand as long as you have a good reason. (Jake, third year, men's tennis)

> I think, when we went around the room and kind of just placed uh what we thought um was most important in a leader on the certain posters. And that gave us a chance to kind of show what we valued as well as like kind of relate to other people, and how they value the same thing, but in different ways, based on what we individually put on our sticky notes. (Rachel, first year, women's volleyball)

> I would think the, when we discussed values, we had to pick our top 3 values. I think each person had their own reasons as to why they picked their own values and so did I. So like, I feel like my reasonings were just as important as other people's reasonings. Even though we discussed about different values and stuff. So and that in that regards I think that sort of seminar, or whatever you want to

call it was the one that did that most for me. (Timothy, third year, men's cross country/track and field)

The one off the top of my mind is the action continuum, I think, when we all got to go to certain spots in the room and just state our own opinions, and we could kind of see like what others like different perspectives on different topics. I thought that was pretty cool. (Ryan, second year, men's tennis)

The data collected from the post-innovation interviews also indicates that after completing the seminar, participants felt that they were able to contribute to their campus community. When asked, "After completing the Leadership for Social Change seminar, in what ways do you think that you can contribute to the campus community?", one participant shared:

I think maybe just leading by example, for, like my teammates. Um, I think for the people that aren't in SAAC, and just how important it is in a team, or even in the classroom and in group settings, just the leadership qualities and important things to be successful, I think, just by doing it myself and others could catch on…

When asked to share a takeaway from the seminar, Jake a member of the men's tennis team talked about wanting to lead:

I want to be a leader. Because, like before this, I wasn't pretty sure I wanted to take responsibility. Like, uh, but the seminar showed me that it's kind of

> important to do that, because every like kind of every person has to be a leader in some way.

Rachel, a first-year student and member of the women's volleyball team shared a specific way that she wants to contribute to the campus community, "Um. Well, after just thinking about like what is important to me, um, personally. I was thinking about doing something with like volleyball, doing like um a game dedicated to like the hard of hearing and deaf individuals." She went on to explain how participating in the seminar made her feel empowered and supported:

> So that kind of just made me feel like, I have more power to do something. Because, you know as a freshman, a lot of people don't let the underclassmen really speak up. There's not a lot of positions of power for underclassmen, um or athletes in general. And so, I think um just. It was good to be feel empowered and like feel like I can actually like put on things and do things that are important to me and have the like support of the staff at the school on my back.

The LSC and Validation Outside of Athletic Identity. The qualitative data collected during the study indicated that participating in the Leadership for Social Change seminar served to validate the participants as valuable members of their college community outside of their athletic identity through interpersonal validation. Interpersonal validation was demonstrated throughout the seminar in a few ways; affirmation of their knowledge and experiences, validating the participants as leaders, and

by allowing them to explore ways they can contribute to their campus community. The participants' personal voice was affirmed through the various activities and discussions. This seemed to be most apparent during the "Zombie Apocalypse" and "Values Sort" activities. Participating in the seminar also allowed participants to learn from and validate each other. During the large and small group discussions participants were able to share their personal experiences which were affirmed as "a reservoir of knowledge" (Rendon, 2002, p. 655). The seminar also validated participants as leaders. Through the curriculum's focus on leadership theory, the participants were able to see themselves as leaders and apply the Social Change Model to their own leadership experiences. Through the Action Continuum and the final presentations, participants were able to explore ways that they can contribute to their campus community.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

College athletes experience college in a way that is different from their non-athlete peers. Mandatory practices, competitions, and travel time, place unique demands on the time of college athletes. These obligations often result in college athletes not being able to participate in high-impact practice activities, even though these activities promote personal growth and development and have a positive impact on learning and persistence (Engelke & Frederickson, 2022). The problem of practice addressed in this dissertation study was that due to their athletic obligations, NCAA Division I college athletes tend not to participate in high-impact practice activities that promote personal growth and development. The Leadership for Social Change seminar was utilized as an innovation to address this issue. Through this study, NCAA Division I college athletes at UC Riverside participated in a high-impact practice activity that promotes personal growth and development. The purpose of the dissertation study was to examine the impact that participating in the "Leadership for Social Change" seminar had on the personal growth and development of NCAA Division I college athletes at UC Riverside. This mixed methods study explored the following research questions:

1. How does participating in a leadership seminar impact college athletes' personal growth and development?
2. How does participating in the Leadership for Social Change seminar help to validate college athletes as valuable members of their college community outside of their athletic identity?

In this chapter I discuss the study's findings, lessons learned, and the study's limitations. I also discuss implications for future practice and research.

Discussion of Findings

For this study, I integrated the quantitative and qualitative data during data collection, using connecting as an integration strategy (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Ivankova, 2015). I collected attendance information (the number of sessions attended) and survey data. I then analyzed the survey data and used the number of seminar sessions that participants attended to determine the participants that could participate in the post-innovation interviews. The post-innovation interview data and field notes were used to expand and explain the survey data, which allowed me to have a more holistic view of the impact of the seminar on the personal growth and development of the study participants.

The quantitative and qualitative data results related to personal growth and development demonstrate complementarity and show that the seminar had an impact on the personal growth and development of the participants. According to the PGIS-II results, the study participants experienced moderate overall personal growth during the seminar (d=.40). The survey results also indicate that the seminar had a significant impact on the participants' personal growth related to using resources ($t_{15}=3.01$, $p<.05$). The quantitative findings were explained with the qualitative data. For example, the field notes highlighted the participants' use of resources to prepare for and give their presentations at the end of the seminar and the post-innovation interview data indicated the participants were more aware of resources available to them after completing the seminar.

Being a higher education professional has taught me that many of the experiences that lead to college students' personal growth and development happen through participation in high-impact practice activities and educationally purposeful activities in general. In working with students that have participated in first-year learning communities and seminars, education abroad programs, undergraduate research, and other activities, I have observed the impact that these activities have on students' personal growth. After participating in these activities, I have seen students being able to adapt better to change, develop and implement plans for themselves, utilize resources that are available to them, and look for growth opportunities. Based on my professional experience, I expected that participating in the seminar would impact college athletes in ways similar to my observations.

Through my analysis of the study's survey results, field notes, and the post-innovation interviews, I found the Leadership for Social Change seminar to be a useful strategy in promoting the personal growth and development of college athletes. Similarly, Navarro et al (2019) also found a high-impact practice activity, global study abroad, as a useful strategy to promote college athletes' personal growth and development. Using Astin's Student Involvement Theory as a framework, Navarro et al, "explored how global studies experiences affected student-athletes' personal, professional, and cultural growth during their higher educational experiences" (p. 108). Through interviewing college athletes that participated in global study abroad experiences, the study found that participating in this high-impact practice activity helped to prepare college athletes for their life after sports and that participating in "high impact practices supported their personal, career, and identity development processes" (p. 114).

This dissertation study's findings suggest that participating in high-impact activities like the seminar can help college athletes develop a sense of civic responsibility through exercises like the Action Continuum activity and the social change/issue topic presentations. Having the opportunity to explore important civic issues can have an impact on college athletes' sense of "civic responsibility, as well as other personal development and academic outcomes" (Gayles et al., 2012, p. 540). Participating in activities like the seminar can also address the disconnect "between the values of student athletes profess and their ability to translate social values to into social action" (p. 550). This was demonstrated in the social change issue/topic presentations and in the post-innovation interviews. In their presentations, the participants not only researched and presented on important issues, they also shared the personal commitments they were willing to make to impact change. Similarly, in one of the post-innovation interviews, a participant talked about using games to promote a civic issue.

Astin's Student Involvement Theory and Rendon's Validation Theory were used to frame this dissertation study. Student Involvement Theory provided context regarding the impact of engaging in a high-impact practice activity like the Leadership for Social Change seminar. Validation Theory was used in the facilitation of the seminar's activities and discussions to ensure that the participants felt affirmed and validated in the space.

The findings of this dissertation study indicate that as a result of participating in the seminar, college athletes experienced personal growth especially as it relates to using resources. These results are supported by Student Involvement Theory. As I explained in Chapter 2, Student Involvement Theory suggests that the more involved students are in their college experience, the more gains they will see in their development (Astin, 1999).

By participating in the seminar, the participants were able to invest physical and psychological energy in a high-impact practice activity. Most of the participants had never attended one of the ARC's workshops or seminars, so participating in the Leadership for Social Change seminar allowed them to engage in a new activity. Since completing the seminar, some participants have continued to increase their involvement by utilizing the ARC's services and reaching out to me for additional information about the ARC's services. This aligns with the fifth postulate of the Student Involvement Theory which states, "the effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that practice to increase student involvement" (p. 519).

Validation Theory also helps to explain the results of this study. In Rendon's Validation Theory students are affirmed inside of and outside of the classroom as "valuable members of the college learning community" (Linares & Munoz, 2011, p. 12). According to the theory, personal development is one of the results of being validated. The qualitative results indicate that participants experienced interpersonal validation in the seminar and as a result felt that their knowledge and experiences were just as important as the knowledge and experiences of others, and they could contribute to their campus community. One participant even used the word "empowered" to describe how she felt after completing the seminar.

The study findings also indicate that participating in the seminar resulted in participants experiencing interpersonal validation, specifically feeling validated outside of their athletic identity. These findings align with Rendon's (2002) study on the validating elements in community college Puente. Like the Puente Project, the Leadership for Social Change seminar was designed to intentionally create a validating

environment that fostered personal growth. In addition to fostering personal growth, validation increases students' confidence in their ability and helps them in applying newly learned skills across various situations (Rendon, 2002). Experiencing validation in the Leadership for Social Change seminar could explain the participants improvement on the "Using Resources" subscale on post-innovation PGIS-II. As a result of experiencing validation, the participants felt confident in applying the skills they learned in the seminar related to using resources for their presentations and future plans.

Lessons Learned

The action research process that culminated with this dissertation study taught me many lessons, and allowed me to grow as both a researcher and a practitioner. As a researcher, one of the lessons I learned during this process is the importance of the participants' voices. During the exploratory cycles of research and as part of the dissertation study, I collected interview data from participants. Hearing current and former college athletes talk about their experiences provided a holistic view of the college athlete experience. The former college athletes I interviewed in the exploratory research cycles, were able to reflect and see their experiences from a different perspective than the current athletes that I interviewed as part of the dissertation study. From interviewing the current athletes that participated in the innovation, I learned that quality programming can have an impact on how they see themselves. The interviews that impacted me the most were the ones where participants talked about feeling empowered after completing the seminar talked about how they applied the content from the seminar to their lives.

As a practitioner this study made me think about other aims of higher education outside of academics and personal growth and development. In "The Real World of College: What higher education is and what it can be", Fischman and Gardner (2022) explain that one of the principal purposes of college "is to create or amplify intellectual capital that ideally should last and be drawn upon for a lifetime" (p. 76). They refer to this intellectual capital as "higher education capital" (HEDCAP). The authors share that HEDCAP is developed when students engage in different activities and explore various identities. This study taught me that by not being able to participate in high-impact practice activities, not only are college athletes missing opportunity to engage in activities that promote personal growth and development, they are also missing out on the opportunity to develop HEDCAP that they can draw upon and will benefit them later.

As a practitioner, this dissertation study taught me the importance of remaining connected to the students I serve. As the head of a large department, my days are often filled with meetings with staff and administrators discussing issues that impact students, without the input of students. Facilitating the seminar gave me the opportunity to check in with students regularly and hear from them about what it is they need. The implementation of the Leadership for Social Change seminar was the result of the members of SAAC saying that they wanted more leadership training. As a result of the study, I have added some of the athletes who participated to my list of students that I check in on every once in a while. As a practitioner it is important that I consider the experiences and voices of the students that I serve. The only way to do that is by talking to and hearing from them.

Limitations of Study

As with any research study, this dissertation study had limitations. The limitations include the duration of the innovation and the sample size. The first limitation of the study was the number of seminar sessions and the length of time for each session. At UC Riverside, quarters are 10-week terms. The seminar took place during the fall 2022 quarter as part of SAAC's bi-weekly meetings. The seminar consisted of five, hour long sessions. The study outcomes might have been different if the innovation spanned two or more quarters and if the sessions were longer.

Another limitation to the study was the sample population. The sample size for the study was small. Even though 31 athletes attended at least one seminar session, there were only 16 participants that completed both the pre- and post-innovation surveys. With nearly 300 athletes at UC Riverside, the 16 study participants represent about 5% of the college athlete population. A larger sample size might have resulted in different outcomes. A larger sample could also provide deeper insight into the impact of the seminar.

Implications for Practice

This study provided several implications for future practice including utilizing athletes' current activities, utilizing the summer, and stronger partnerships between the Athletics Department and student services departments. Each of these practices could serve to create a more holistic college experience for athletes.

The first implication for practice involves using activities in which college athletes already participate and transforming them into high-impact practices. One of the consistent themes that emerged from the literature and the study is the lack of flexible

time that college athletes have due to their athletic obligations. The demands on their time due to athletic obligations make it difficult for them to participate in high-impact practice activities. Transforming existing activities into high-impact practices would result in giving college athletes the opportunity to participate in these activities without adding additional tasks to an already full schedule.

This dissertation study was an example of utilizing an existing activity (the SAAC meetings) and transforming it into a high-impact practice activity (the Leadership for Social Change seminar). This could also be done with the community service activities that the athletes at UC Riverside already participate in. The various sports teams in UC Riverside's participate in community service activities such as volunteering at local schools, youth summer camps, and sporting events. The Athletics Department could work with the Division of Undergraduate Education to transform these experiences into service-learning and/or collaborative projects, where athletes earn credit hours while participating in high-impact practice activities.

Another opportunity for future practice involves utilizing the summer to allow college athletes the opportunity to participate in high-impact practice activities. Typically, the Athletics Department at UC Riverside requires athletes to complete course work during the summer. Athletes usually complete 1-2 courses in the summer which is a lighter course load compared to the academic year. Also, most sports at UCR are not in season during the summer, so there are no competitions or travel. The Athletics Department could work with the ARC, Student Life, and other student services departments on campus to create experiences for college athletes. For example, college

athletes could participate in ARC workshops and seminars during the summer and even participate in a peer mentoring program.

Lastly, an implication for future practice should be stronger partnerships between the Athletics Department and campus stakeholders to provide more holistic programming for athletes. The staff in Student Athlete Academic Services is responsible for monitoring athletes' eligibility, monitoring study hall hours, and some academic counseling. These responsibilities leave little time to develop and implement programming that promotes athletes' personal growth and development. However, there are several student services offices on campus that offer a number of educationally purposeful activities including high-impact practices. The Athletics Department could work with other campus departments to have practitioners implement programming during team and other meetings. The Athletics Department could also work with other campus departments to develop incentives for athletes to participate in educationally purposeful activities.

Implications for Future Research

Within this action research study including the exploratory cycles of research and the dissertation study, there are several opportunities for future research. Possible future research could include a longer innovation/study and examining college athletes participating in educationally purposeful activities with their non-athlete peers.

In discussing the limitations of the study, I explained that the innovation took place over one 10-week quarter and consisted of 5 sessions. Future research could examine the impact of college athletes participating in the leadership seminar over multiple quarters with more sessions. More sessions over a longer duration of time would allow for more activities to teach the seminar concepts and more time to engage with the

curriculum. A longer seminar could have an impact on outcomes and provide additional information that did not emerge from the shorter seminar.

Another opportunity for research could be examining the impact on college athletes' personal growth and development when they participate in educationally purposeful activities with their non-athlete peers. For this dissertation study, college athletes participated in the seminar with only other college athletes. One of the themes that emerged from my exploratory cycles of research was college athletes' lack of interaction with their non-athlete peers. Research suggests that college athletes and their non-athlete peers can benefit from engaging with each other (Comeaux et al, 2011; Gayles et al, 2012; Traynowicz et al, 2016). Participating in more activities with the larger campus population could also reduce the college athletes' feelings of isolation (Navarro & Malvaso, 2015). Participating in a seminar with both college athletes and non-athletes could yield different results.

Conclusion

College athletes' obligations to their sport cause them to experience college in a way that is different than their non-athlete peers. Daily time commitments include practices, workouts, competitions, travel, and team meetings. In addition to these demands, college athletes must also keep up with their studies to meet NCAA and institutional academic requirements. All these demands leave little to no flexible time in their schedule to be able to participate in high-impact practices and other educationally purposeful activities. As a result, college athletes typically do not have the opportunity to engage in activities that promote personal growth and development.

Using Student Involvement Theory and Validation Theory as frameworks, this dissertation study examined the impact that participating in a high-impact practice activity had on the personal growth and development of NCAA Division I college athletes at UC Riverside. The Leadership for Social Change seminar was implemented as an innovation to give college athletes the opportunity to participate in an activity that could promote their personal growth and development while also increasing their involvement. The findings of the study indicate that participating in the seminar resulted in college athletes experiencing personal growth and development.

This innovation provided one approach to supporting the personal growth and development of college athletes. Through collaboration and intentionality, it is my hope that I can continue to develop and implement programming to make the college athlete experience a more holistic one.

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY APPROVAL FOR HUMAN SUBJECT TESTING

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Brian Nelson
Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - Tempe
480/727-4550
Brian.Nelson@asu.edu

Dear Brian Nelson:

On 6/14/2022 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	An Examination of College Athlete Participation in a High-Impact Practice
Investigator:	Brian Nelson
IRB ID:	STUDY00016051
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Dean Support, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc); • Flyer, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Interview Consent, Category: Consent Form; • Interview Questions, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • R Roberts IRB Protocol, Category: IRB Protocol; • Recruitment Email, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Seminar Consent, Category: Consent Form; • Seminar Schedule, Category: Other; • SOE Dean Support, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc); • Survey, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT FLYER


LEADERSHIP FOR SOCIAL CHANGE SEMINAR!
"BE THE KIND OF LEADER YOU WOULD FOLLOW"
Develop skills to become an effective leader and have a positive impact on the world around you! Include this seminar on your co-curricular transcript!
WHAT YOU'LL LEARN:
Interpersonal skills
Communication skills
Leadership styles
*Participation is voluntary
Sign up here: https://forms.gle/N1txLRMrwjsdg5DQ9
DATES:
Wednesdays, 5pm-6pm,
Sept. 28 - Oct 26
LOCATION:
Academic Resource Center (ARC) 156 Skye Hall, Seminar Room
Contact Info: rena.roberts@ucr.edu
IRB Approval: Arizona State University (STUDY00016051), UC Riverside (NUCR 22-005)

APPENDIX C

LEADERSHIP FOR SOCIAL CHANGE SEMINAR SYLLABUS

Leadership for Social Change Seminar

The Leadership for Social Change Seminar is a 5-session program designed to teach students skills to communicate in a leadership setting effectively and confidently. This seminar requires you to participate in activities designed to develop leadership, interpersonal communication, and public speaking skills, and it will improve the quality of your life if you keep an open mind and actively participate! The seminar consists of both leadership theory and application.

Learning Objectives

As a result of participating and completing the Leadership for Social Change Seminar, students will…

1. Develop and enact a plan congruent with their identities and interests.
2. Develop a sense of integrity and clarify values.
3. Understand the effects of individual behavior on oneself, on others, and on the community.
4. Work effectively in groups which are diverse in their composition to formulate creative ideas, solutions, or other aims.
5. Work in groups to develop shared goals.
6. Utilize vision, authenticity, credibility, and trustworthiness to inspire others and sustain organizational commitment and satisfaction.
7. Demonstrate self-awareness and a willingness to seek and receive feedback on one's performance from others and to modify one's approach to leadership.
8. Show sensitivity to individual and cultural differences within groups and the ability to tailor one's style of leadership based on this knowledge.
9. Engage in campus, local, state, national, and global decision-making opportunities.

What is Expected of You

- On-time attendance at each seminar meeting
  If you must be absent, please communicate your reason at least 24 hours before class by emailing me at rena.roberts@ucr.edu.
- Active participation in all class activities and group discussions
- Respect, support, and encouragement for your peers
- A positive attitude and willingness to learn and challenge yourself

What You Can Expect from Me

- Meaningful and educational activities in a fun, laid-back environment
- Honest and constructive feedback during seminars
- Respect, support, and encouragement
- A positive attitude

Schedule at a Glance

Session 1 - Overview

- Introductions – Getting to Know Each Other
- Overview of the Social Change Model of Leadership "The 7 C s"

Session 2 – Group Values
- Collaboration, Common Purpose, Controversy with Civility
- "Zombie Apocalypse" team challenge

Session 3 – Individual Values
- Consciousness of Self**,** Congruence**,** Commitment
- Values clarification activity
- "Who Am I?" Activity
- Identity experiential
- Inclusive Leadership

Session 4 – Community/Society Values
- Citizenship
- Action Continuum
- Synthesis of the 7 Cs
- Prepare for presentations

Session 5 – Presentations/Close Out
- Prepare for presentations
- Presentations
- Closing Reflections

Presentations

For this activity you will be making a **3-5 minute** presentation on a social change issue/topic that is important to you using these guidelines:

1) Choose an issue or topic related to a community or social change that you are passionate about. Why did you choose this particular topic?
2) Briefly discuss the most important and current aspects of this topic/issue.
3) Describe what level of action you have currently undertaken on this issue in reference to the Action Continuum (to be reviewed in seminar)
4) Showcase 2 resources (such as organizations, websites, articles, etc.) that educate and/or work for social change for this particular issue.
5) Looking ahead, what personal commitment(s) are you willing to make to work for social change on this issue? Use the Action Continuum as a guide.

Presentations in small groups will be strongly encouraged and you will receive additional presentation time. Each presentation must include some type of visual aid. Some examples of visual aids are power point presentations, showing us a website, a flyer, poster, etc. Be as creative as you like.

Co-curricular Transcript & LinkedIn Profile -- Be sure to add this seminar to your co-curricular transcript Highlander Link (https://highlanderlink.ucr.edu/) and to your LinkedIn profile.

R'Success Workshop Recognition – For each seminar session your attend, you will receive a stamp for your R'Success Card. Collect 7 stamps during the academic year, and you will be invited to the end of the year recognition event! For more information about the R'Success Participation Recognition program, go to: https://arc.ucr.edu/rsuccess#rsuccess_participation_recognition

CONGRATULATIONS ON A GREAT SEMINAR!

Hope to see you again in a future program with us!

APPENDIX D

PERSONAL GROWTH INITIATIVE SURVEY – II (PGIS-II)

Unique Identifier:

Age:

Gender (Sex):

Ethnicity (Race):

Class Standing (Sophomore, Junior, etc.):

Sport(s):

Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS)-II

Personal Growth Initiative Scale – II ©

Christine Robitschek, Ph.D., 2008

For each statement, please mark how much you agree or disagree with that statement. Use the following scale:

0 = Disagree Strongly

1 = Disagree Somewhat

2 = Disagree a Little

3 = Agree a Little

4 = Agree Somewhat

5 = Agree Strongly

1. I set realistic goals for what I want to change about myself. 0 1 2 3 4 5

2.	I can tell when I am ready to make specific changes in myself.	0 1 2 3 4 5
3.	I know how to make a realistic plan in order to change myself.	0 1 2 3 4 5
4.	I take every opportunity to grow as it comes up.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5.	When I try to change myself, I make a realistic plan for my personal growth.	0 1 2 3 4 5
6.	I ask for help when I try to change myself.	0 1 2 3 4 5
7.	I actively work to improve myself.	0 1 2 3 4 5
8.	I figure out what I need to change about myself.	0 1 2 3 4 5
9.	I am constantly trying to grow as a person.	0 1 2 3 4 5
10.	I know how to set realistic goals to make changes in myself.	0 1 2 3 4 5
11.	I know when I need to make a specific change in myself.	0 1 2 3 4 5

12.	I use resources when I try to grow.	0 1 2 3 4 5
13.	I know steps I can take to make intentional changes in myself.	0 1 2 3 4 5
14.	I actively seek out help when I try to change myself.	0 1 2 3 4 5
15.	I look for opportunities to grow as a person.	0 1 2 3 4 5
16.	I know when it's time to change specific things about myself.	0 1 2 3 4 5

Personal Growth Initiative Scale – II ©

Dr. Christine Robitschek, 2008

Scoring Information

There are four subscales on the PGIS-II: **Readiness for Change, Planfulness, Using Resources, and Intentional Behavior.** A **Total Mean Score** also can be calculated.

General information:

- All items are positively worded.
- To calculate the subscale scores, sum the item responses for that subscale and divide by the number of items in the subscale.

    - Thus, a subscale score is the mean response value for items on that subscale.
- The Total Mean Score is calculated by summing the subscale scores and then dividing by 4 (i.e., the number of subscales).
    - This provides a mean subscale score and reduces weighted effects of the different number of items on the subscales.

Subscales and their items (numbers in parentheses are item numbers from the PGIS-II as it is administered):

Readiness for Change

(2) I can tell when I am ready to make specific changes in myself.

(8) I figure out what I need to change about myself.

(11) I know when I need to make a specific change in myself.

(16) I know when it's time to change specific things about myself.

Planfulness

(1) I set realistic goals for what I want to change about myself.

(3) I know how to make a realistic plan in order to change myself.

(5) When I try to change myself, I make a realistic plan for my personal growth.

(10) I know how to set realistic goals to make changes in myself.

(13) I know steps I can take to make intentional changes in myself.

Using Resources

(6) I ask for help when I try to change myself.

(12) I use resources when I try to grow.

(14) I actively seek out help when I try to change myself.

Intentional Behavior

(4) I take every opportunity to grow as it comes up.

(7) I actively work to improve myself.

(9) I am constantly trying to grow as a person.

(15) I look for opportunities to grow as a person.