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I Know I Can Learn: The Perceptions of NCAA Division I Football College Athletes with Learning Disabilities

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While 11% of all college students are reported to have a learning disability (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016), that percentage may be considerably higher when looking at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I college athletes. Farrey (2009) reported as many as 54% of athletes on three revenue-producing teams at one institution had documented learning disabilities. Many students with learning disabilities are academically underprepared for the rigors of higher education and may be considered a vulnerable population within a higher education setting (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005). The purpose of this study is to examine Division I Football Bowl Series (FBS) college athletes' with learning disabilities attitudes toward learning. Nine football college athletes with learning disabilities at a single Division I FBS institution participated in semi-structured interviews. Throughout the data, one major theme appeared consistently; learning competence, referring to the participants' belief that they were capable and willing to learn. While many participants were not aware of their particular disability, it was clear the participants wanted to learn, felt they could learn, and had developed strategies to assist them in being successful in the classroom. The results of this study will allow those working with this particular population of college athletes to develop a greater understanding of their academic experiences, perceptions, and needs.

Keywords: learning disabilities, college athletes, learning

A national survey of undergraduate students revealed that 11% of college students reported having a learning disability (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Many students with learning disabilities are academically underprepared for the rigors of higher education and may be considered a vulnerable population within a higher education setting (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA, 2016) explains that learning disabilities make it difficult for the brain to receive, process, and effectively communicate. This condition impedes learning for many; ultimately, affecting their schooling and their adult lives (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are the second largest disability subgroup on campus (next to learning disabilities) to be served through the Office of Disability Services (Harbour, 2004). Of the undergraduate student body, 11% reported having ADHD (Horn & Nevill, 2006), and it is estimated that 4% to 12% of children have ADHD (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001; Lerner & Johns, 2012), making ADHD one of the most common conditions among children. Those who have learning disabilities often are diagnosed with ADHD as well (Goldstein, 2007; Silver, 2006). Studies have estimated that of those who have ADHD, 25% to 50% also have learning disabilities (Goldstein, 2007; Silver, 2006).

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 make it illegal for institutions of higher education to discriminate against individuals with learning disabilities including those with ADHD (Denbo, 2003). As such, federal law mandates colleges and universities provide equal opportunities for students with learning disabilities. Both the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 require institutions to provide individuals with learning disabilities appropriate accommodations to assist them throughout their academic endeavors (Denbo, 2003).

Federal laws protect the rights of individuals with learning disabilities, but some organizations such as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) have been found to be noncompliant with such legislation (Trainor, 2005; Weston, 2005). Prior to 1998, the NCAA, through the organization's initial eligibility practices, refused to allow special education courses as well as remedial courses to fulfill core course requirements for prospective college athletes with learning disabilities (Department of Justice, 1998; Trainor, 2005; Weston, 2005). Ultimately, prominent cases brought forth against the NCAA by college athletes (e.g., Chad Ganden, Toure Butler, and Michael Bowers, all who had learning disabilities) led the NCAA to reevaluate its practices and procedures regarding college athletes with learning disabilities (Trainor, 2005; Weston, 2005). In order to comply with federal law, NCAA bylaws now count special education courses as well as remedial course work towards potential college athlete's core course requirements (NCAA, 2016). NCAA legislation also permits potential college athletes with learning disabilities to have extended time to complete their core course requirements, allowing those with learning disabilities to complete up to three core courses upon graduating from high school to meet either the NCAA core course requirement or the GPA requirement (NCAA, 2016). As it relates to continuing eligibility, college athletes with learning disabilities are eligible to receive a waiver allowing them to take less than a full course load and still be eligible for practice and competition (NCAA, 2016).

To better understand the complete college experience of college athletes with learning disabilities, studies of the perceptions of this population are warranted (Clark & Parette, 2002;

Gayles, 2009). Although prior research has focused on educational experiences of the general college athlete population, particularly if the college athlete believes he or she is receiving a well-rounded educational experience (Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2006), little is known about the experiences of college athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities.

Much remains to be learned about the obstacles that college athletes endure (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). To better assist college athletes' academic achievements, college athlete experiences must be studied closely (Monda, 2011). The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine in detail the experience of NCAA Division I college athletes' attitudes toward learning. Specifically, the study examined a sub-group of college athletes, those with a diagnosed learning disability.

Literature Review

Students with Learning Disabilities in Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education

For most children, signs they may have a learning disability begin in elementary school (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Nearly 40% of all children with learning disabilities are in elementary school and range from ages 6 to 11 (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). However, the likelihood of being identified before the age of nine as having a learning disability is low). Students often struggle in the subject area of reading and can experience difficulties learning to read. Behavioral issues can contribute to the child's disruption in learning. Poor motor skills, reduced attendance, and difficulty focusing can lead to children experiencing difficulties during primary education

As children continue in primary education, the course material becomes significantly more difficult and requires increased levels of thinking. Within grades four through eight, some students begin to experience problems in history and science (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Children are commonly identified with learning disabilities between ages 9-14 (Lerner & Johns, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). At this age, students with learning disabilities also begin to experience problems socially as students often perceive their peers with learning disabilities negatively. Due to this disapproval, students with learning disabilities experience lower social status than their peers without disabilities (Conderman, 1995; Smith-D'Arezzo & Moore-Thomas, 2010). Furthermore, students with diagnosed learning disabilities find it difficult to have relationships with their peers without disabilities because many students do not want to tarnish their reputations by associating themselves with this special population of students (Smith-D'Arezzo & Moore-Thomas, 2010).

Most individuals do not fully understand what learning disabilities are. A Tremaine Foundation study of attitudes about learning disabilities revealed that parents, teachers, and administrators associate learning disabilities with severe disabilities such as intellectual disabilities and autism (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014). Inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms can assist in the improved social skills and an increased understanding of this population (Cortiella, 2014; Lerner & Johns 2012). The IDEA requires students to be placed in the least restrictive environment that meets their educational needs. More than 60% of all students with learning disabilities spend the majority of their time at school (80%) in a general education classroom (Cortiella, 2014; IDEA, 2016).

Upon entering secondary education, students with learning disabilities often have a difficult time, particularly in the areas of mathematics and reading. Many fall behind in school

and the reality of repeatedly failing leaves many students frustrated (Lerner & Johns, 2012). On average, nearly half of all students with learning disabilities are three grade levels behind, and a quarter of students with learning disabilities are one grade level behind in the subjects of mathematics and reading (Wagner, Cameto, & Newman, 2003). Failure often leads the student with learning disabilities to participate in delinquent acts, evidenced by more than 10% of imprisoned youth having learning disabilities (Cortiella, 2014; Quinn, Rutherford, & Leone, 2001). Further, more than 30% of students with learning disabilities will face disciplinary actions at school, such as suspension or expulsion (Wagner et al., 2003). Although 60% of all learning disabilities are diagnosed in secondary education, the number of individuals identified with learning disabilities dramatically decreases after age 17 (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). According to Lerner and Johns (2012) this could be attributed to the fact that a large amount of students with learning disabilities do not graduate from high school. Only 67% of students with learning disabilities graduate from high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Of those who complete high school, only 10% of individuals with learning disabilities continue their education at a 4-year college or university within two years of graduation (Wagner et al., 2005). Unlike school-aged children with disabilities who are protected by IDEA, college students with disabilities are protected by the Office of Civil Rights, specifically, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (e.g., Amendments Act of 2008 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973). Section 504 (1973) protects individuals with disabilities from being discriminated against or denied participation in federally funded programs. Since different legislation governs disability practices in postsecondary education, students often find that their documentation from high school does not fulfill the institutional requirements (National Joint Commission on Learning Disabilities, 2007).

Once in college, 11% of college students with reported learning disabilities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016) find themselves academically underprepared for the rigors of higher education (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005). Furthermore, more than half of those students with learning disabilities who were in special education in high school do not seek out additional assistance once entering postsecondary education (Wagner et al., 2003), often due to fear of being labeled (Troiano, Liefeld, & Teachtenberg, 2010), and therefore forfeit valuable support and resources. For example, college students with diagnosed learning disabilities are eligible to receive additional support in writing and test preparation (Troiano et al., 2010). Most students with learning disabilities can also receive accommodations such as priority registration, counseling, alternative test taking environments, additional time on exams, books in alternative format, and note takers (Troiano et al., 2010). Students with learning disabilities who utilize academic support programs often times have a higher GPA than those who do not utilize the services provided to them, and in turn, experience higher graduation rates (Wagner et al., 2003).

The Role of Race and Gender in Diagnosis

Research has shown that race can predict learning disability classification (Patton, 1998; Skiba, Simmons, Ritter, Gibb, Rausch, Cuadrado, & Chung, 2008; Talbott, Fleming, Karabatsos, & Dobria, 2011). Since 1970, the percent of African American students being identified with a learning disabilities has been increasing (Ong-Dean, 2006; Patton, 1998; Skiba et al., 2008). In primary as well as secondary schools, African American students are being over-represented in special education classrooms (Shifrer, Muller, & Callahan, 2011; Talbott et al., 2011). According to the US Department of Education (2000), African Americans make up 14%

of the population, but more than 18% of those ages 6-21 diagnosed with learning disabilities are African American (Cortiella, 2014).

Although according to IDEA (1997) racial and cultural factors cannot be used in the diagnosis of learning disabilities, African American students experience greater odds of being identified with a learning disability (Patton, 1998; Skiba et al., 2008; Talbott et al., 2011). African American students are more likely to be identified with a learning disability than their Caucasian counterparts (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). A student's socioeconomic status, academic history, as well as native language appear to influence identification too (Patton, 1998; Talbott et al., 2011; Shifer, Muller, & Callahan, (2010); Skiba et al., 2008). Lerner and Johns (2012) believes that over-representation of African Americans in special education does not permit this population to enjoy the high quality education that is warranted. Due to the fact that African Americans are over-represented in special education, the diagnostic criteria used to identify learning disabilities needs to be examined to ensure that African Americans are not being over-represented (Lerner & Johns, 2012; Shifer et al., 2011).

Like race, gender can also be used to determine the likelihood of an individual being identified as having a learning disability (Lerner & Johns, 2012; Shifer et al., 2011; Talbott et al., 2011). Men are three times more likely than women to be identified with a learning disability (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Another study found men to be over-represented in the category of specific learning disabilities, with 66% of men being identified as having a learning disability (Shifer et al., 2011).

College athletes with Learning Disabilities

In college sport, African-American males (24.9%) are the second largest racial group competing within NCAA Division I (Zgonc, 2010), but constitute the highest percentage of NCAA Division I football college athletes with 45.8%, (Zgonc, 2010). African American college athletes also have a large presence in NCAA Division I basketball, representing the highest percentage of male (60.9%) and female (51%) participants (Zgonc, 2010).

There appears, however, to be conflicting data regarding the intersection of these two groups – college athletes and students with learning disabilities. A survey completed for members of the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics (N4A) stated only 2.7% of the college athlete population had a learning disability (Lombardi & Miller, 2007). In contrast, Farrey (2009) reported that at one NCAA member institution an average of 54% of college athletes in revenue producing sports (i.e. football and men's basketball) received the diagnosis of a learning disability. The disparity in rates may be in part due to low assessment rates of college athletes. The NCAA (2009) conducted a survey of the resources and behaviors of NCAA Division I member institutions regarding academic support success, determining that only 3% of all NCAA Division I college athletes have been assessed for learning disabilities (NCAA, 2009). The NCAA (2009) reported that 39% of NCAA Division I college athletes are not tested for learning disabilities. To assist in meeting the needs of college athletes with learning disabilities, half of the athletic academic advisors at NCAA Division I institutions reported having an educational program devoted solely to college athletes with learning disabilities (NCAA, 2009).

Despite the wide range of rates of learning disability in college athletes, little academic research has focused on this population, although they may have unique special needs and face unusual pressures (Gayles, 2009; Papanikolaou, Nikolaidis, Patsiaouras, & Alexopoulos, 2003).

Off the playing field, college athletes with learning disabilities often experience problems in mathematics, written expression, and reading (Barton & Fuhrmann, 1994; Clark & Parette, 2002). For some college athletes with learning disabilities, academic difficulties can lead to emotional and social dissatisfaction (Barton & Fuhrmann, 1994; Clark & Parette, 2002). For example, college athletes experience loneliness, frustration, homesickness, discouragement, self-doubt, and a sense that no one cares (Papanikolaou et al., 2003). Furthermore, faculty and students often associate college athletes with negative stereotypes (Baucom & Lantz, 2001). Many athletes who have been diagnosed with learning disabilities experience poor self-esteem and low frustration tolerance as well as societal and emotional challenges (Clark & Parette, 2002; Kiluk, Weden, & Culotta, 2009). In fact, the stereotypes surrounding college athletes intensify if he or she has a learning disability (Clark & Parette, 2002). Due to the fact that many athletes feel that they have little self-worth outside of their sport (Papanikolaou et al., 2003), some individuals with learning disabilities find the only place that they can be seen as equal to their peers without disabilities is on the playing field (Kiluk et al., 2009).

Many Division I universities have services in place to assist college athletes with learning disabilities; however, providing a quality education and teaching applicable life skills to college athletes with learning disabilities is not a priority among some institutions of higher learning (Clark & Parette, 2002). Although 75% of athletic academic advisors possess master's degrees (NCAA, 2009); most individuals working with this population of college athletes are unqualified, and due to a lack of sufficient training, unable to recognize those with learning disabilities (Clark & Perette, 2002). Building collaborative relationships with resources on campus (i.e., faculty members, disability services, social workers, psychological services) assists athletic academic advisors in meeting the needs of college athletes with learning disabilities (Lombardi & Miller 2007; White, 2008). Although academic support programs for college athletes with learning disabilities are warranted, it is important that college athletes with learning disabilities diversify, and meet individuals outside their peer group (Clark & Perrett, 2002). Academic support personnel should encourage members of this population to be independent and self-motivated, ensuring that college athletes with learning disabilities live a full life, growing into community leaders, and ensuring that they have the optimal collegiate experience (Clark & Perrett, 2002; Weiss, 2011).

Weiss (2011) argued that college athletes with learning disabilities need structure and centralized support. Learning assistance programs, coupled with meetings with a learning specialist, can assist college athletes with learning disabilities throughout the transition process (Weiss, 2011). Similarly, Clark and Perette (2002) provided suggestions on how to best serve the growing number of college athletes with learning disabilities. College athletes with learning disabilities should be informed about their accommodations, and taught strategies to optimize learning (Clark & Perette, 2002). College athletes who have learning disabilities are often aware of the negative stigma surrounding them; as such, it is important for those working with this population to provide positive reinforcement (Clark & Perette, 2012). Although there are academic plans in place to assist college athletes with learning disabilities, little is being done to evaluate the impact that such programs are making (Clark & Perette, 2012; Weiss, 2011).

Lombardi and Miller (2007) surveyed 168 athletic academic support personnel who represented 45 different athletic conferences, primarily at the NCAA Division I level. The survey revealed that 45% of participants had a program specifically for college athletes with learning disabilities. Of the athletic academic support personnel surveyed, only 17 individuals stated that their athletic institution screened all college athletes for learning disabilities, and 22 individuals

reported that college athletes were individually selected and screened for potential learning disabilities (Lombardi & Miller, 2007).

White (2008) examined the experiences of NCAA Division I male college athletes in traditional revenue producing sports who were enrolled in a program for at-risk college athletes. Some of the participants in the study included college athletes with learning disabilities. A major theme that appeared in data was labeling, referring to the degree to which college athletes believed they were characterized as academically incapable. Most of the participants felt overwhelmed by their course load, and did not take advantage of accommodations or ask faculty members for assistance out of fear of being labeled with a disability. Further, some of the participants felt that the faculty, staff, and even peers held them to low academic standards. The college athletes' relationship with their coach, and the willingness for their coach to help them, provided the participants with incentives and encouragement which appeared to play a significant role in the experience of most of the participants (White, 2008). White (2008) concluded that through education and perseverance, college athletes could possibly overcome their perceived perception of being labeled; ultimately, providing the college athletes with a more satisfying experience.

Often, students who are high-level interscholastic athletes get through primary and secondary education with minimal effort. Coaches at this level are pressured to produce results, and for some interscholastic athletes, athletic talent takes priority over academic merit (Beem, 2006). There have been instances of teachers altering grades to ensure outstanding interscholastic athletes are eligible to compete, and ultimately have the necessary academic credentials to participate at the next level (Beem, 2006). This type of action expresses to interscholastic athletes that academic endeavors are not important, creating low expectations for athletes (Beem, 2006). In fact, many successful interscholastic athletes as well as college athletes have little expectations for themselves expectations outside of the gym (Galipeau & Trudel, 2004; MacNamara & Collins, 2010; Papanikolaou et al., 2003; Perdy, 1983; Yopyk & Prentice, 2005). Furthermore, participation in interscholastic sport can cause students to perform poorly in the classroom due to missing class for athletic events or being distracted by sport participation (Beem, 2006).

Upon entering higher education, college athletes have been identified as being "dumb jocks," and based on that perception college athletes are held to low academic standards (Burke, 1993; Preacco, 2009; Watt & Moore, 2001). College athletes are aware of how they are perceived; however, they do not feel that these stereotypes depict them as an individual (Jackson, Brown, Brown, & Manul, 2002). Still, college athletes are often not expected to be smart or motivated (Burke, 1993; Nelson, 1983; Watt & Moore, 2001). Negative perceptions of college athletes only perpetuate the stereotype. A study of undergraduate student's perceptions of college athletes revealed that Caucasian male students believed college athletes lacked intelligence and were enrolled in a less challenging curriculum to ensure athletic eligibility (Sailes, 1996). Faculty members often express negativity towards college athletes out of resentment towards the special treatment college athletes are given in regards to admissions and academic support (Sailes, 1996).

Given the negative perceptions toward college athlete academic achievement in general, it would be useful to hear how college athletes view their learning. This study employed a qualitative method to better understand the academic experiences of college athletes with a diagnosed learning disability.

Method

Procedure

Upon Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, an initial e-mail explaining the purpose of the study and seeking participation was sent to athletic academic advisers at 25 NCAA Division I-FBS institutions. One institution responded and permitted the primary researcher to come to its campus and conduct face-to-face interviews with college athletes who agreed to participate in the study. Interviews were audio-recorded with permission from participants.

Nine football college athletes at a single NCAA Division I FBS institution with diagnosed learning disabilities were interviewed. The institution is a member of a power five conference located in the Southwest portion of the United States. The primary researcher who conducted the semi-structured interviews is a white female in her mid-twenties, with five years' experience working in athletic academic support. The interviews were conducted in a secluded environment, which consisted of a large room with table in the back of the athletic academic support center. The interviews were conducted over a two-day period. Eight in-person interviews were conducted on day one, and one interview was conducted on day two. The athletic academic support staff asked the primary researcher to limit the interviews to 30 minutes due to the fact that the interviews took place during the hour when the college athletes were scheduled to meet with their learning specialist. The average interview time was 17 minutes. Prior to the beginning of each interview, the college athletes were asked to read the informed consent statement. The primary researcher verbally explained the purpose of the study, and informed the participants they could discontinue participation anytime without penalty. Each college athlete signed the informed consent statement, and was given an additional copy of the statement for his records. Furthermore, each participant granted permission to digitally record his interview. To further assist in ensuring the college athletes confidentiality, each participant was asked to select a pseudonym.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The data for this study were collected using semi-structured interview methodology. Semi-structured interviews guide the researcher in focusing on certain themes, and, as such, there are many advantages to this methodology (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Through the use of open-ended questions, the primary researcher is in a position "to obtain descriptions of the lived world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena; it will still have sequence of themes to be covered as well as suggested questions" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 124). Semi-structured interviews allow the primary researcher to develop the questions before interviewing the participants, ensuring that the interview is focused and time is managed effectively (Patton, 2002).

Data Analysis

Each interview was transcribed, allowing for the subsequent analysis of meaning (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Each unit of data was assigned its own distinctive code. Coding was natural which allowed for patterns to occur in the data, and also deliberate because the primary

goal was to find patterns in the data (Saldana, 2009). During the initial phase of coding, in vivo coding, emotion coding, and values coding was used.

In vivo coding. *In vivo coding* is useful in an educational environment and places priority on understanding the culture or worldview of the participant (Saldana, 2009). In vivo coding allowed the researchers to code the transcript utilizing the actual words of the participant (Saldana, 2009). Using the specific words spoken by the participant can assist the researcher in grasping and uncovering significant data (Charmaz, 2006; Saldana, 2009).

Emotion coding. *Emotion coding* is acceptable for nearly all qualitative inquiries, specifically when the study involves the participants' experiences and actions (Saldana, 2009). Emotions are an important part of the human experience, and, as such, emotional coding provides the researcher with a deeper insight into the worldview of the participant's perspectives (Saldana, 2009). All emotions experienced by the participants are labeled (Saldana, 2009).

Values coding. *Values coding* uses the participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs to capture their worldview perspectives (Saldana, 2009).

The second coding cycle consisted of rethinking the initial coding efforts to allow the researcher categorize the data into themes (Saldana, 2009). Pattern coding and theoretical coding were used throughout the second cycle of coding. Pattern coding pulls together meaningful data and groups, sorting in into smaller themes and constructs (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2009). Ultimately, this type of coding allowed the researcher to search for causes and explanations in the data and assist in developing major themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2009). Theoretical coding revolves around the central theme of the study, and analyzes the words that appear to explain the theme (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Saldana, 2009).

Trustworthiness

Several strategies were utilized to assist in the trustworthiness of this study. The primary researcher and interviewer took part in a bracketing interview, essentially participating in an interview using the interview protocol for this study, to assist the primary researcher in revealing and removing any biases. In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument. By revealing and explaining her bias, the primary researcher provided a greater understanding as to the intentions behind the study as well as the conclusions of the study. To assist in removing bias, a research group was utilized to assist in finalizing the themes. The research group consisted of five faculty members who have a background in qualitative research. Lastly, to assist in establishing trustworthiness, member checks were utilized in which the participants were asked about surfacing themes were also used (Merriam, 2009). After transcribing all nine interviews, the participants were e-mailed a copy of their interview transcript. This allowed participants to review, revise, and expand upon their answers. Furthermore, the participants were also e-mailed the themes to see if they believed the themes accurately portrayed their experience in higher education. Although the interviews and themes were e-mailed to the participants, the participants did not contact the primary researcher with any changes.

Results

Through this study's semi-structured interview design, the researchers obtained poignant and personal details which shed valuable insight into how NCAA Division I football college

athletes with a diagnosed learning disability perceive their academic experience. From the data, one primary theme with two sub-themes emerged from transcript analyses.

Learning Competence

Throughout the data, one major theme appeared consistently, *learning competence*, which referenced the participants' belief that he was capable and willing to learn. Only three of the nine college athletes interviewed could definitively identify their learning disability diagnosis (i.e. dyslexia). Five of the participants did not know what their learning disability was. Despite not being aware of their particular diagnosis was, it was clear the participants wanted to learn, felt they could learn, and had developed strategies that assisted them in being successful in the classroom. Two distinct sub-themes emerged within the learning competence theme, *confidence in learning* and *learning strategies* that the college athletes used to assist them throughout their academic endeavors.

Confidence in learning. Despite the fact that the participants had diagnosed learning disabilities, it was clear that they did not allow their disability to deter them from learning. Some participants even used their disability to motivate them to achieve academically. Although some of the participants did not enjoy school, and for most of the participants learning in the classroom was difficult, the majority of the participants were driven to learn.

For Dewayne, learning the game of football has been easier than learning in the classroom. "I feel like I'm a better learner with football I don't know why," Dewayne explained, "I can learn stuff faster with football than with school." Although the pace of football in college was faster than the game was in high school, he felt confident in his ability to learn the plays:

I mean pretty much just trying to learn the plays, I mean they are a lot harder than high school. I mean but, I'm picking it up fast. I feel like I pick up football a lot faster than school at times. Despite the fact that Dewayne felt that football provided a greater venue in which to learn, Dewayne liked school because he enjoyed "learning fast" and learning about "new things." Furthermore, although Dewayne expressed that he wished he could be smarter, ultimately he felt that he just had to "push through." Dewayne has a strong desire to learn. "I mean I want to learn the answer, but it takes time to learn it," Dewayne stated. Thus, despite Dewayne's love for football, he also desired academic success.

Xio said, "I ain't that smart. I mean, I'm smart, but I ain't that smart." Xio had ADHD and because of his diagnosis explained that he had a difficult time sitting still. "I do move around a lot. I just can't stay still," Xio explained. "Like if I'm just sitting there, I just start rockin', it's just my nerves, I donno. I just gotta do something." Although Xio had ADHD, he said "I ain't ashamed of it. It ain't no big deal 'cause I know I can learn. I know what to do and what not to do." Thus, despite having a learning disability, Xio was confident in his ability to learn. "I'm confident in myself," Xio exclaimed, "I mean I got ADHD, that ain't nothing."

Jeremy expressed that learning really wasn't hard for him and he did admit that he had to work hard academically throughout high school. Although after he was diagnosed with a learning disability it did make him think differently about himself. "It make me feel different," Jeremy said, "because I think I can do it, I just gotta work harder." Thus, despite having a learning disability, Jeremy felt that he could succeed in the classroom.

Tim loves football, and puts forth more effort into football than he does his academic work. "It's something I love to do," Tim explained, "if I loved school I would probably do the same thing, but I don't love school." Learning had always been a difficult for Tim. Although

Tim claimed that he was not ashamed of his learning disability, he felt that his learning disability differentiated him from his peers. “I feel like I can’t do as much as a normal student does,” Tim explained. Still, despite his difficulty in the classroom, Tim feels that he can excel. “When I was told I had a learning disability, I think I just felt sorry for myself,” Tim said, “but I tell myself that I can do it.”

Thomas believed that school was hard, and invested much of his energy into football, “I guess I do my best with everything,” Thomas said, “I just really don’t do that with school.” Thomas found it difficult to fit his busy school schedule in with his sport obligations. School is not an interest to Thomas, “I’m not interested, I only go 100% on stuff I like to do.” Still, Thomas did realize that he was capable of succeeding in the classroom, but he needed to put forth effort in order to achieve success.

Although Ron has dyslexia, he had learned how to overcome the obstacles that he faced. “I knew I wasn’t not smart,” Ron said. Due to his diagnosis, Ron still does not like taking certain classes, like reading or English; however, he did not let his diagnosis get in the way of his academic success. Ron used his experience as an individual with dyslexia to inspire others who may be facing a similar situation:

Public service announcement: that it doesn’t matter what other people think of you. If you have a learning disability you can push through it, and I mean, there are success stories everywhere. I mean Einstein is dyslexic, Tom Cruise is dyslexic and he’s a successful actor, read all the time. It’s kind of like knowing that there are people out there with the same thing as me who have done, I mean one is mathematics and one is acting. So, it’s just, almost inspiring. I’m not going to say that they are my role models, but knowing that there are people out there who have over come it, um, means that I could do it to type of thing.

Ron refused to let his disability define him. “I am who I am,” Ron stated, “I know I can change somethings, but I’m pretty happy with what I am.” Thus, Ron has strived to use his disability to set a positive example.

Overall, despite the fact that these participants played football at a major Division I university and were diagnosed with a learning disability, most still wanted to learn and felt they were capable of learning if they put in the effort.

Learning Strategies. All of the participants spoke about strategies that they used to help them learn in the classroom, and ultimately, to achieve academically. All of the athletes interviewed had a tutor provided by the athletic department for at least one class. Furthermore, seven of the college athletes revealed that outside of meeting with the resource staff provided to them by the athletic department (i.e. tutors, learning specialist) that they did not study.

Storm did not study at all at home, and instead filled his time playing video games. He relied on a learning specialist to assist him with his schoolwork. “My learning specialist help me a lot, as far as my work and such,” Storm said. “If I have anything due, she help me with that. I have meetings and stuff she keep me on track with that. As far as work, she keep me up to date.” Overall, Storm felt that his learning specialist was essential to his academic success and helping him to stay organized.

Xio explained to me that he had trouble “rememberlizing stuff.” To assist him, Xio enlisted the help of tutors and learning specialist. “I get help with tutors,” Xio said, “That’s a

boost.” Xio enjoyed meeting with his learning specialist, and felt a sense of pride completing tasks that his peers had not yet completed:

Ah...it’s good, like, uh, (learning specialist) helps me with most of my stuff and tonight I got tutoring at uh 7 and I got one at 8, but uh everybody else they struggling to do their work. I’m already done. Like we do stuff ahead of time. That’s what I like. We just jump on it. So we don’t have to worry about it later on, so umm...that good.

Aside from the services that Xio utilized, he also sits in the front of the classroom to stay focused and uses flash cards. Although Xio utilizes tutors and learning specialists to assist him with his academic endeavors, he does not use any other accommodations that he is eligible for based on his learning disability. “I don’t use none of ‘em to be honest,” Xio stated. “I think I get longer time on test, and I get a recorder in class, stuff like that. I don’t use it though.” Thus, although Xio is aware that he is eligible to receive accommodations due to his learning disability, he does not take advantage of his accommodations.

Thomas does not like school because he does not like “studying and stuff.” However, he admitted that he does have to study for his tutors. Thomas meets with his tutors and learning specialist, and thinks that they help him succeed in the classroom. He is tutored “twice to three times a week,” and meets with his learning specialist “every day” for assistance. Although Thomas is aware that he is registered with the disability service center on campus, other than tutors and learning specialist, Thomas does not use other accommodations that he is eligible for based on his ADD.

Tim does not particularly like school, but he realized that “school is a must.” The athletic academic support staff has helped Tim to stay on track with his classwork. They have provided him with tutors, ensure that he has completed his work, and that he is attending class. Tim not only utilized tutors to help him with his classes, but also met with a learning specialist. He is aware of disability services on campus, and utilizes his accommodations which allow him to receive a copy of the notes. Tim also utilizes other strategies that make learning easier. Tim said making “flash cards” as well as talking to himself out loud have helped him in his academic endeavors.

Roger expressed to me that he feels school is more important than football, and he enjoys the social aspect of school, but said, “I don’t really study a lot.” He admitted that when it comes to school his biggest challenge is “taking test” because he has trouble with memorization. Although Roger feels school is important, college has presented itself to be more difficult than high school.

High school was such much easier, high school was easier. I ain’t go to one of those high school that ya know, the football players didn’t have to do their work. I mean, we got away with a lot, but we still had to do our work. It wasn’t real difficult.

To help him succeed in college, Roger takes advantages of services such as tutors and learning specialist.

Well, I take advantage of the tutors. I use that actually as a time to do my work. When I see the tutors, so. That’s why I don’t do it at home. We got so many tutors and learning specialist that when we meet with them it’s time to do our work.

Although Roger takes advantage of services that are offered through the athletic department, he is unsure of what his diagnosis is as well as the services that he can utilize through disability services on his campus to further assist him in his academic endeavors. When it comes to strategies, Roger has learned that staying proactive in class and taking notes can be beneficial. “I used to hate taking notes,” Roger said, “but now I realize how much they actually help.”

Jeremy is learning how to balance both school and football. He enjoys school, especially “the environment of school.” When it came to describing the academic program at Jeremy’s school, Jeremy said, “It’s a program that help me get better with doing my work.” To help him with his classes, Jeremy went to tutoring for his “major” classes. Although Jeremy uses tutors to help him with his work, he is unaware of his disability and could not identify the accommodations he was eligible to receive because of his learning disability and/or ADHD. Jeremy uses several strategies to help him with his schoolwork, including paying attention and repetition. “I’m a visual learner,” Jeremy answered, “I just go over it.”

Dewayne felt that he learned at a different pace when compared to his peers. “I think they just say I’m a slow learner. I mean I learn, but I just learn slower than most kids. I guess I have to study more...a lot more,” Dewayne stated. Dewayne struggles with reading and math. To assist in his learning, Dewayne used the technique of memorization. “Basically, I try to memorize it and if I can’t memorize it, it’s just hard for me,” he stated, “So, I try to memorize it the best way I can. I try to study a lot if I can.”

To help Dewayne with his learning, he has “a lot of tutoring.” When Dewayne studied, he was primarily studying with tutors; however, he did study “10 to 15 minutes” at home after tutoring to keep the material fresh in his mind. Although Dewayne could not identify what his specific disability was, he did explain that he had met with disability services on his campus and did take advantage of accommodations that he was eligible for due to his learning disability and/or ADHD:

I believe it’s called disability services. I went over there and had a meeting with one of the ladies over there, I mean it’s a good program. Like they make sure they get you whatever you need, whatever your disability is they try to put you in a situation where it’s good for you.

Due to his learning disability, Dewayne is eligible to receive extended time on tests, an accommodation that he took advantage of. Furthermore, Dewayne uses the technique of memorization to assist him in answering test questions. He felt that he is good at memorizing material, and if he does not prepare for the test then he can become stuck and cannot answer the question.

For Michael, college has been significantly harder than high school. The hardest thing about school, according to Michael, is making good grades. “It’s hard to make an A in college,” Michael stated, “In high school it’s really easy, but in college you really got to put your time into it.” In high school, Michael had friends that would provide him with additional assistance in regards to his academic work. “Like in high school I got people that like helped me cheat and such,” Michael stated. Michael believed that because he was a good football player that the students at his high school would help him to cheat; however, has realized that in college such behaviors are too risky:

Like, they helped me, like look on their test and get the answer and pass and stuff. Then you like get to college and you really can't do that 'cause if you get caught you really can get kicked out of school and stuff.

To help Michael achieve academically in college, he had tutors help him "the best way they can." For Michael, tutoring had proved to be extremely beneficial. "Yes, it helped me out a lot," Michael said, "I know on my own I wouldn't study, so like 'cause I got to study, it helped a lot." Tutoring is the only accommodation that Michael took advantage of. However, he has learned that it is beneficial to "study the day before the test."

Due to his strong performance in the classroom, Ron was the only college athlete interviewed that is not required to be in the academic center to attend mandatory meetings with tutors and/or a learning specialist because he is not deemed "at-risk." Despite his outstanding academic efforts, Ron still took advantage of tutors, his academic advisors, and his accommodations to help him navigate in the classroom despite being diagnosed with dyslexia. Ron has a difficult time reading, and so he tends to take more math courses. Every semester, he requests tutors to assist him with topics that he may be "struggling" with. "It's mostly English," Ron explained, "I have trouble mostly with spelling and with punctuation." To assist him with his struggles in English, Ron also utilizes the writing center in the athletic department to help him proof read his papers. Furthermore, Ron spoke very highly of his academic advisors who periodically check in on him to see how he is fairing in the classroom and to provide him with support.

Ron is aware of his disability, and ensured his teachers knew he has dyslexia and may need additional assistance. "I tell all my teachers I have accommodations here," Ron said, "I can record things in class and use my computer to take notes." Although Ron does not always use the accommodations that are available to him to because he is an individual with dyslexia, he seeks out help when assistance is needed.

Ron learned of his dyslexia in fourth grade. He credits his parents for helping him learn strategies to assist him with his dyslexia.

Well, they have always been there, both of my parents have. If I ever need anything proof read, she will do it for me. I'm a slow typer, so if I ever had to type for a whole, I would type and then she would type in two minutes and get half of a page done. Then I would start typing again. My dad has done that too. When I was younger it was hard for me to read fast, to before I had books on tape, they would read out loud to me. It's just been a big help.

Aside from his parents assisting him with learning strategies to help Ron overcome dyslexia, he worked with a learning specialist in elementary school and middle school who helped to teach him learning techniques and strategies. Ron utilized several techniques that help him in the classroom.

Um, spelling, kind of elementary spelling test type thing. I would literally sit down with my mom and I would spell it. If I got it wrong, I would spell it three times. Just repetitive things like that helped me a lot. What else do I do? It's all routine now, so I don't even realize it half of the time. I like making list, like what I have to do, kind of a check list. I'm happy when I get to check something off the list. I can't go to long without taking a

break because I get distracted. I've noticed that, I've gotten a lot better at it. I sit down to try to do something, and then the stack of papers over here is messy. So, I clean that up. It's almost like I'm avoiding it, but I'm continually not trying to do it.

Overall, although the college athletes who participated in this study had diagnosed learning disabilities, they appeared to be motivated to learn and felt that they had the capability to learn. All of the participants took advantage of the academic accommodations offered to all college athletes by the athletic department (e.g., tutors, learning specialist). Although many participants were unaware of what learning disability they were diagnosed with and few took advantage of the accommodations that were offered to them through disability services (e.g., extended time for taking tests) because of their learning disability and/or ADHD, several participants utilized learning techniques and strategies that assisted them in the classroom.

Discussion

This study sought to understand the academic experiences of NCAA Division I football college athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities. The sample for this study consisted of African-American football college athletes, and was consistent with literature describing African-American males with learning disabilities as overrepresented in the American education system (Ong-Dean, 2006; Shifer et al., 2011; Talbott et al., 2011). In addition, the majority of the participants (five) were diagnosed with a learning disability after entering higher education; which appears to be consistent with the trend of students failing to be diagnosed with learning disabilities until they reach higher education (Stodden, 2003).

Learning competence. Several of the participants described their high school experience as “easy,” with several stating that they put minimal effort into their academic work throughout high school. One participant even said that because he was a football player, he was able to cheat off of his friends throughout high school. Scenarios like this are not rare in the high school setting. Successful interscholastic athletes are often passed through primary and secondary education (Beem, 2006) and receive preferential treatment due to their athletic ability (White, 2008). By allowing interscholastic athletes to cheat, it reiterates that athletics takes precedence over academics (Beem, 2006). Furthermore, it creates low academic expectations for those who participate in sports and does not allow them to effectively prepare themselves academically for the next level (Beem, 2006).

The college athletes in the study recognized that college was far more challenging than high school, and that in order to succeed they must work harder. The participants that were interviewed were resilient; they appeared to be driven to learn, and, furthermore, they felt that they could learn. Literature regarding students with learning disabilities revealed that those with learning disabilities often are rejected, teased, ignored, and are less popular than their peers without learning disabilities (Conderman, 1995; Smith-D'Arexxo & Moore-Thomas, 2010). Athletes with learning disabilities experience low self-esteem (Kiluk et al., 2009). Not only are these students diagnosed with a learning disability, but they are also college athletes (Clark & Parette, 2002), who may feel that they are perceived as lazy, dumb, and unmotivated (Smith-D'Arexxo & Moore-Thomas, 2010). Despite past studies, which state that college athletes and those with learning disabilities feel that they are unable to learn, the participants in this study felt that they could learn and they wanted to learn.

Literature suggests that because many college athletes lack academic merit, and receive exceptions during the admission process that often college athletes will be unable to complete in

the classroom against (Bowen & Levin, 2003; Gerdy, 1997; Harrison & Lawrence, 2004; Yost, 2010). The participants in this study not only felt that they could learn, but that they learned better with football, and, simply that learning was easier with football. This finding brings into account that these college athletes with learning disabilities may learn differently. Literature regarding learning styles was popular throughout the 1980s, with more than 60 studies on learning styles being conducted (Dunn, Beaudry, & Klavas, 1989). The literature suggests that everyone learns in different ways, and each person has a particular learning style. When students understand their learning style, and instructors use methods that engage particular learning styles, students' academic achievement increases (Dunn et al., 1989). Observational studies have shown that general education classrooms in the United States teach to one type of learner, the students typically sit in their seats, and the instructor teaches in a lecture-based setting from information presented in the textbook (Cuban, 1993; Goodlad, 1984; Nystrand, 1997).

However, not all students learn in such an environment (Bransford, 2002). The participants in this study learned differently. They learned through football, suggesting that the college athletes in this study possess what Gardner (1993) refers to as bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. Gardner's (1993) theory of multiple intelligences infers that people learn in different ways and through different domains and modes of instruction. Gardner speaks to the "body as a form of intelligence" (p. 207). In fact, Gardner (1993) specifically references football players when referring to bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. This intelligence involves extensive communication from the brain to the various mechanisms in the body, and further involves coordination, goal setting, and timing. The objects in the intelligence are the athletes' hands, which are used to shape various elements of the individual's social world (Gardner, 1993). Bodily-kinesthetic learning does not represent a lack intelligence; but a style of learning that is not often represented in the classroom, which may be reflected in the difficulty these participants had in focusing and learning in a traditional classroom.

Many participants expressed that they took advantage of the resources offered to them by the athletic department. All of the participants had tutors and all but one participant worked with a learning specialist. It is very positive and encouraging that college athletes took advantage of some of the resources that were provided to them, because many students with learning disabilities tend to fall behind in their schoolwork (Lerner & Johns, 2012). Furthermore, the literature describes the large amount of money that higher education is spending on academic support for college athletes (Wolverton, 2008). Thus, if there is a need for these services and clearly college athletes are utilizing such resources, investing in tutors and mentors appears to be a positive experience and a wise investment. Participants also learned strategies that assisted in enhancing the learning process. They used materials such as: flashcards, memorization techniques, studying before the test, repetition, taking notes, and sitting in the front of the class to help them learn. Using such skills to achieve a goal is referred to in the special education literature as self-determination (Vaughn, Boss, & Schumm, 2007).

The participants felt that their tutors, mentors, and athletic academic advisors played an important role in their academic success. In fact, many of the participants relied so heavily on the support of tutors and mentors that several participants did not study or do any schoolwork when they were not with a tutor or mentor. Due to the demands of intercollegiate athletics, it is important that these students receive structured support (Weiss, 2011). However, offering college athletes almost unlimited support services could be enabling them, allowing these college athletes to feel that they are incapable of doing any kind of work on their own. College athletes are already seen as academically incapable (Weiss, 2011). Therefore, by requiring them to go to

tutoring sessions and meet with mentors, it is possible allow these students to feel that they are incapable of completing their work independently (Burke 2003; Nelson, 1983; Watt & Moore, 2001). It should also be noted, such services are offered to all college athletes. The athletes in this study did not utilize their accommodations that were offered to them due to their disability.

Although these college athletes took advantage of the academic services offered through the athletic student-life center, similarly to the findings of White's (2008) study, most did not take advantage of the other accommodations that were offered to them based on their disability. Many were also unaware of their diagnosis. This is consistent with the literature because the majority of individuals do not understand what learning disabilities are (Smith-D'arezzo & Moore-Thomas, 2010; National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014). However, it is important that the students understand their diagnosis and take advantage of the accommodations that are provided to them because of their disability. Utilizing accommodations from disability services can assist in meeting the individual need of the college athlete with a learning disability (Troiano et al., 2010). Although most college students with diagnosed learning disabilities fail to seek out the appropriate accommodations (Wagner et al., 2003), students who choose to use the resources to assist them with their disability have higher GPAs and graduation rates when compared to those students who do not use their accommodations (Troiano et al., 2010).

The participants did not appear to be ashamed or embarrassed at the fact they had a learning disability. Yet, they did not use the accommodations they were eligible for, and most participants admitted that they did not tell anyone (i.e., friends) that they were diagnosed with a learning disability. Students with learning disabilities also face criticism from their peers and are not accepted into social groups (Conderman, 1995; Smith-D'Arexxo & Moore-Thomas, 2010). Perhaps the fear of being labeled or perceived as dumb deterred college athletes from using their accommodations? Some of the participants said that they did not use their accommodations because they said they did not need to; however, the goal of accommodations is to help these students compete in the classroom and be on an equal playing field with their peers who do not have disabilities. Having a learning disability greatly influenced the academic performance of the participants, but despite this disability, the college athletes believed they could learn and expressed a desire to learn.

Limitations

The sample for this study was NCAA Division I - FBS college athletes at one institution. A majority of the participants were from areas in the United States where football is the primary sport and is engrained in the culture of the state. Furthermore, because the interviews took place when the college athletes were meeting with their learning specialist, there were time constraints regarding how long the interviews could last. The majority of the college athletes interviewed were underclassman and had limited college experiences. Furthermore, the athletic academic advisors scheduled the interviews, and in essence, the advisors selected the college athletes that could be interviewed for this study. The interviews also took place over a two-day period with eight of the nine interviews being conducted on the first day. Although I did take breaks between interviews, there is the possibility that researcher fatigue may have impacted the study (Clark, 2008). Lastly, the primary researcher was a young Caucasian female researcher who interviewed male participants; the majority of the participants were minorities. Thus, the lack of rapport and the limited time that I had to interact with the college athletes could have impacted the study. It should also be noted that the primary researcher is an individual with a learning disability,

compassion bias may have interfered with the interviews and analysis of the data to a limited degree.

Recommendations

Hishinuma and Fremstad (1997) maintain that there is a lack of understanding surrounding college athletes with learning disabilities. By better understanding the college athletes' attitudes, institutions can meet the needs of college athletes. More than half of those students with learning disabilities who were in special education in high school do not seek out additional assistance once entering postsecondary education (Wagner et al., 2003). The participants in this study not only knew very little about their disability, but they did not take advantage of the accommodations that were offered to them based on their disability. Students with learning disabilities who utilize academic support programs experience higher graduation rates (Troiano et al., 2010). It is vital that this population is educated about their disability and encouraged to take advantage of the accommodations they are provided to them. Furthermore, those working with this population should inform those with learning disabilities that are capable.

Possibly the strongest take away from this study was that these students wanted to learn and felt they could learn. One such thought would be to integrate intercollegiate sport and social work (Gill, 2014). "College athletic department provide ideal settings for social work counseling and case management learning opportunities" (Gill, 2014, p. 113). Scholars theorize that in many ways "sport is a form of social work" (Gill, 2014, p. 305). After all, like social work, sport strives to enrich the lived experience, foster personal development, and promote inclusion and boost social mobility (Gill, 2014; Houlihan, 2001; Lawson, 2005). Furthermore, similarly to social work, sport promotes unity, civility and social responsibility (Frisby, 2005; Gill, 2014; Hartman, 2003; Scheyett, Dean & Zeitlin, 2014). Allowing social work to get involved with intercollegiate sport would not only assist in diversifying the discipline but it would also assist college athletes and create empathy (Gill, 2014). Social workers have an opportunity to work with these athletes and the athletic department to assist in this population further understanding their disabilities and assisting these students in reaching autonomy.

Future Research

Results from this study have shown that there are major gaps in the literature regarding college athletes with learning disabilities. In reality, few studies have been conducted on this specific population of college athletes. It is critical that researchers continue to learn more about college athletes with learning disabilities to gain a deeper understanding of this population. Future researchers should examine female college athletes as well as college athletes from different sports with learning disabilities. Future studies should not be limited to just one institution, but multiple institutions in several NCAA divisions. Not only should future studies involve learning more about the perceptions of college athletes with learning disabilities, but literature is needed regarding the transitional process of this population (initial transition in to higher education as well as transition into sport retirement), as well as a greater understanding of how and why this sub-group of college athletes is motivated. Furthermore, the field would benefit from longitudinal studies involving the experiences of college athletes with learning disabilities.

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Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Pseudonym	Age	Year	Race*	Major	Hometown	Family Structure*	Transfer Student	Position	Starter	Diagnosis*
Dewayne	19	Freshman	African American	Communication	Urban	Dad/Grandma	No	Defense	No	Didn't know
Xio	19	Freshman	Black	Undecided	Urban	Mom	No	Defense	No	ADHD
Jeremy	19	Freshman	Black American	Sports Management	Urban	Mom	No	Defense	No	Didn't know
Roger	22	Senior	Black	General Studies	Urban	Divorced Parents	Yes	Defense	Yes	Didn't know
Michael	21	Sophomore	African-American	Physical Education	Urban	Mom	No	Defense	No	Didn't know
Tim	19	Sophomore	Mixed	General Studies	Rural	Grandparents	No	Offense	No	Learning Disability
Storm	19	Freshman	Black	Secondary Education	Rural	Mom	No	Offense	No	Didn't know
Thomas	19	Sophomore	White	Communication	Urban	Mom & Dad	No	Special Teams	Yes	ADD
Ron	20	Sophomore	White/Caucasian	Pre-Business	Urban	Mom & Dad	No	Offense	Yes	Dyslexia

**Student self-identified*