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Navigating the Transition from Community College to University: A Grounded Theory Examination of the Student-Athlete Experience

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This study aimed to explore the factors which influence National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) student-athletes’ ability to successfully navigate transfer between community college and a Division I university. Student-athletes face both academic and athletic requirements that facilitate transfer. Understanding the barriers, challenges, and support systems that influence their experiences are important for coaches, academic counselors, administrators, and student-athletes themselves to have a deeper understanding of this process. Extant literature has reviewed factors that impede university transfer for general students, yet the student-athlete subpopulation remains relatively unexplored. To address this gap, the present study involved individual interviews with 15 participants enrolled at an NCAA Division I institution. Data was analyzed through a grounded theory approach resulting in the "Community College Transfer Student-Athlete Model (CCTSAM), ” which examined the environmental, intrinsic, and intrapersonal influences and barriers involved in the transfer from community college to a Division I university. Research findings provide recommended actions for counselors and athletic administrators at both community college and Division I institutions which would build better support practices and improve communication for transfer student-athletes.

Keywords: Division I, Junior College, NCAA, Eligibility, perception, academic requirements
Like the general student population, many student-athletes utilize community colleges (CCs) to access a four-year university. Student-athletes identify that CCs are affordable, provide a more intimate classroom setting, and provide the opportunity to compete athletically (Burgess & Cisneros, 2018; Harper et al., 2009). In 2016, the NCAA estimated that 10% of Division I (DI) athletes transferred from CCs; between 15-20% of those student-athletes participated in high-profile, revenue-generating sports; football, men's and women's basketball, and baseball (Paskus, 2017). Though the NCAA (2023b) monitors transfers between university institutions, it does not record consistent data on CC transfers. Two types of CC transfer groups exist; those who start at a CC (2-4 transfer) and those who use the CC as an intermediary step between universities (4-2-4 transfer). For each of these students, the experience of attending multiple institutions plays a role in their collegiate experience (Libadisos et al., 2016, Swingle & Salinas, 2020). There is a great need to understand the CC student-athlete transfer process, but minimal research guides practitioners from either the institution or the athletics department, on how to support these students (Burgess & Cisneros, 2018; Fletcher et al., 2003; Swingle & Salinas, 2020). Policies and procedures at institutional levels can be reviewed with the intent to minimize barriers and create an environment that encourages successful transfer.

Transfer student-athletes are unique, possessing different experiences from their peers in the general student population at both the CC and the four-year university. In comparison to non-athlete peers at either institution, athletics participation serves as a strong motivation for transfer and persistence (Burgess & Cisneros, 2018; Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Gaston-Gayles, 2014; Harper et al., 2009; Kissinger et al., 2011). Student-athletes consider both academic and athletic opportunities at their transfer institution (Burgess & Cisneros, 2018; Kramer, 2023; Swingle & Salinas, 2020). Kramer (2023) notes that despite examination into subpopulations of student-athlete groups’ college decision choices, a direct comparison has not been completed between athletes and non-athletes.

While extant research provides an awareness of the transfer student-athlete experience (Burgess & Cisneros, 2018; Kramer, 2023, Libadisos et al., 2016; Swingle & Salinas, 2020), inquiry on the CC to DI university process is largely absent, meriting the need for a detailed review. Understanding this would inform, academic counselors1, administrators, coaches, and student-athletes at CCs and universities on how to effectively guide students through transfer. The present study aimed to explore the process in which CC student-athletes navigated transfer to a DI university.

**Background**

**Academic Factors Influencing Transfer**

CC transfer student-athletes must navigate complex NCAA academic transfer legislation, Bylaw 14 (NCAA, 2023), to preserve their athletic eligibility to compete at a DI school. Though the NCAA provides resources that inform the transfer process (NCAA, 2023c), these resources

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1 This term commonly refers to student support services faculty who provide direction on course selection, educational goals, and counseling at a community college. The job description is like that of an academic advisor, a staff position at a four-year institution. For the purpose of this article, the term counselor will be used to refer to both staff and faculty advising positions.
are not specific to any institution, leaving room for misinterpretation by both students and counselors. Further, these resources provide a cursory outline of a very complex process. Academic factors that affect transfer eligibility include initial and continuing eligibility, course articulation, and advising.

**Initial Eligibility.** The NCAA academic standards a CC transfer student-athlete must meet are dependent on an individual's high school academic eligibility certification. Those certified as 'qualifiers,' have less stringent transfer requirements, than those certified as 'non-qualifiers' (NCAA Bylaw 14.5.4, 2023). For example, non-qualifiers must earn an Associate’s Degree, complete at least three full-time semesters, complete a minimum of 48 transferable credits, etc. to earn DI eligibility. These NCAA academic rules exist in addition to general university admission requirements. While many student-athletes are given preferential admission to a university (Ingram & Huffman, 2017), and academic support systems for DI student-athletes are standard practice, community colleges commonly have far fewer resources dedicated to athletics and academic services (Rubin & Lewis, 2020; Swingle & Salinas, 2020) Those who fail to meet either NCAA or university requirements while at the CC risk losing their spot on an athletic roster or admission to a four-year institution.

**Continuing Eligibility.** In addition to initial eligibility requirements student-athletes must meet DI continuing academic eligibility requirements upon entry at the university. NCAA Division I Bylaw 14.4.3.5 mandates that student-athletes meet a benchmark of degree completion (40/60/80%) based on the number of full-time terms of enrollment. Transfer student-athletes who fail to meet progress towards degree of the declared major program at the DI university are not eligible to compete.

**Articulation and Advising.** Transfer students report confusion in understanding what courses at the CC will transfer to the four-year university (Burgess & Cisneros, 2018; Neault & Piland, 2014;) In fact, Inside Higher Ed. (2020) reports that 2 in 5 students lose credits during transfer, and on average, it takes 2 weeks to a month for courses to be evaluated. This timeline may not be prompt enough to support student-athlete transfer.

Student-athletes reported similar confusion and academic setbacks when self-interpreting NCAA transfer rules (Burgess & Cisneros, 2018; Libadisos et al., 2016; Swingle & Salinas, 2020). Research shows that CC students underutilize academic counselors at two-year institutions (Burgess & Cisneros, 2018; Kissinger et al., 2011). CC counselors estimate that only 9% of staff are highly effective at advising transfer students on their transfer options (Inside Higher Ed., 2020). Further, administrators at universities cite that CC counselors do not work with four-year institutions on advising transfers (Inside Higher Ed., 2020). Given the varying rules surrounding initial eligibility and course articulation and the significant impact that meeting eligibility rules have for student-athletes, proper advising is critical to transfer success.

**Athletics Factors Influencing Transfer**

Athletics participation serves as a strong academic motivator for student-athletes at both CC and four-year institutions (Burgess & Cisneros, 2018). Athletic scholarships are only offered at NCAA DI and II levels, therefore transfer to those institutions also offer a financial incentive. On average, 1 in 23 students is a student-athlete at NCAA DI member institutions (NCAA, 2023c). The greatest indicator of DI college choice, according to 89% of male and 87% of female student-athletes was athletics (NCAA, 2020).
A student-athlete’s season of competition, and NCAA recruiting periods as outlined in Bylaw 13 (NCAA, 2023), may also affect one’s ability to transfer. Unlike the general population who follow publicly communicated university admission requirements and deadlines, student-athletes may be offered special admission or exceptions to regular application periods (Ingram & Huffman, 2017). Therefore, student-athletes going through the recruitment process may be forced to complete all university and NCAA transfer requirements in a small window of time and with a great sense of urgency (Rubin & Lewis, 2020). For example, a mid-year transfer student-athlete would have to complete this process during holiday periods when both the CC and/or four-year institution may have limited hours or be closed. Additionally, because athletics competition serves as a strong factor in college choice (NCAA, 2020) student-athletes may not know what schools will offer them future playing and potential scholarship opportunities. These students may not be able to plan for transfer until their transfer destination is determined, leaving them without specific direction on what academic requirements are needed.

Student-athletes with intent to transfer may not be in regular communication with counselors or coaches while at the CC (Burgess & Cisneros, 2018; Swingle & Salinas, 2020), rather relying on secondhand information that may help them transfer. During the athletic recruitment process, DI coaches are typically the primary point of contact at the four-year institution for student-athletes (Huml et al., 2019). Therefore, the quality and accuracy of any information regarding transfer from athletics and counseling staff is critical. Any miscommunication between coaches, counselors, and students can result in eligibility issues (Rubin & Lewis, 2020).

**Research Design**

**Guiding Framework**

Two guiding theoretical frameworks, Transfer Student Capital (Laanan et al., 2011) and Liminality Theory (Turner, 1969) and the study’s research questions guided the development of the interview questions. A critical construct in examining the transfer student experience, developed by Laanan et al. (2011), is Transfer Student Capital, which identifies non-cognitive factors that impact the transfer student experience. Transfer Student Capital (Laanan et al., 2011) asserts that students must maintain a level of knowledge about the successful transition between a CC and a four-year institution and that a student's overall experience at a CC can impact the transfer process to a four-year institution. Building upon previous research that explored student involvement, Laanan (2007) identified the importance of social, psychological, and extra-curricular engagement of transfer students. Acknowledging the diverse and often complex individual experiences of transfer students, Transfer Student Capital (Laanan et al., 2011) aimed to conceptualize CC transfer by understanding what information students had, and how they obtained that information, on the function of transfer. Transfer capital could be as specific as course articulation and admission criteria or as broad as the university campus climate. The authors theorized that the more transfer capital a student possessed, the easier it would be for the student to socially and academically integrate at their new institution. Transfer Student Capital was used to assess knowledge critical for successful transfer, both in understanding university admission and NCAA transfer requirements and how a participant’s relation to athletic identity influenced their engagement in attaining transfer capital.

Rooted in anthropological studies, Liminality Theory (Turner 1969) examines the 'in-between' phase a person experiences when moving through a rite of passage or ritual. More
specifically, the change in how a person views themselves in relation to who they were prior to the change, and who they will become after the event. Originally developed by Arnold van Gennep, Liminality Theory specifies three distinct phases that people experience during their rite of passage. The first phase, ‘pre-liminal rites,’ can be explained as a ‘death’ or closure of the person’s identity before the rite of passage. The second phase, ‘liminal rites’ is the individuals between period where they no longer belong to the group they defined themselves with prior to the rite of passage, nor the group they strive to be in. Turner (1969) coined this period of transition as the ‘betwixt and between’. Turner further developed liminality theory by positing that a person’s sense of identity and construct of reality changes based on the rite of passage they experience. Either people return to their societal norm, or they become a part of the new societal construct, joining others who have experienced a similar rite of passage. Finally, during the post-liminal rites phase, the individual is reintroduced as a ‘new’ person after completion of their rite of passage (Turner, 1969).

Presuming that the process of community college to a four-year university is in itself a rite of passage, Liminality Theory (Turner, 1969) examines the ‘in-between’ phase a person experiences when moving through a rite of passage or ritual. Liminality Theory was used to explore the perceptions of each participant’s sense of self as guided by the theory’s focus on experiences before, during, and after the transfer (Turner, 1969).

Research Questions

Building upon phenomenological research on transfer student-athletes (Libadisos et al., 2016), this study used a constructivist paradigm and qualitative inquiry to construct a model for how student-athletes navigate the complexities of university and transfer athletics eligibility. A grounded theory approach to analysis (Charmaz, 2014) was implemented. Grounded theory allowed the authors to engage with data by identifying patterns, similarities, major themes, and the context in which these themes interacted with each other (Charmaz, 2014). A theoretical understanding and conceptual model of the experiences of transfer student-athletes was formed (Glaser & Straus, 1967) from this analysis.

Through the participants' academic and emotional perception of transfer, the process itself was explained. Accordingly, the present study aims to address the aforementioned gaps in literature and add to the body of knowledge surrounding the community college to Division I transfer process. Though current theory has addressed elements of this process, the specific student-athlete experience of transfer has been unexplored. Further, by investigating this process, future transfer student-athletes’ could be supported to a greater degree. Exploring these gaps would also aid in strengthening the bridge between CC and DI institutions who support student-athlete transfer. This study was guided by the following research questions (RQ):

RQ 1: What is the process of how student-athletes successfully transfer from CC to a DI university?

RQ 2: How do student-athletes attain knowledge or information on transfer requirements?

RQ 3: What role does athletics play in a student-athlete's ability or decision to transfer?

Interview questions were guided and informed by the theoretical frameworks of the study and the research questions, as seen in Appendix. Students were asked to recall their experiences and
emotions and to reflect on their period of transition between CC and the DI institution—referencing Liminality Theory (Turner, 1969) and RQ1. Guided by Transfer Student Capital (Laanan et al., 2011) questions related to RQ2, participants discussed the knowledge they had regarding both NCAA transfer, and university admission requirements, and where or whom this information was attained. Finally, because athletics is a critical key of this populations experience, RQ3 and the related questions explored what role athletics and coaches played in participants’ ability and decision to transfer.

Methods

Research Setting and Sampling

The study was conducted at a DI institution. Purposeful sampling methods were used (Creswell, 2013) to identify student-athletes meeting the following criteria: a) completion of at least one full-time semester of community college before transfer, b) and who were currently enrolled and participating in their athletic team. Participants were recruited via email and/or text message. Student contact information was shared with the first author by the athletics department. A total of 15 athletes agreed to participate representing 30% of the total eligible participants at this institution.

Data Collection

Individual interviews were conducted by the first author in a private, office setting in a building accessible to student-athletes. Confidentiality was maintained by FERPA-regulated guidelines and written permission to use the data collected from each participant was obtained. The study received IRB approval from the research site. Each participant completed a demographic questionnaire, which recorded their institutions and dates of attendance, type of transfer, gender, race/ethnicity, sport participation, and a pseudonym to protect their privacy and identity. Upon completion of each recorded and transcribed interview, participants were provided the raw data to review and clarify their responses as a form of member checking the data collected (Given, 2012). In addition to individual interviews, four analytical memos were written during intermediary points of data collection. These memos provided a space to pause between data collection, reflect on the observations and recollections of participants, and provide personal observations which were also used in data analysis, memos acting as a step between data collection and composition of research findings (Charmaz, 2014).

Data Analysis

Before data analysis, the first author’s positionality in the study was acknowledged. Her connection to the study area provided unique insights into understanding and analyzing data, but also biases and expectations about the CC transfer pathway. As a 4-2-4 transfer student, the first author understood the complexity and challenges of navigating a successful transfer. Additionally, after working in multiple Division I athletics departments (including the study’s research site), she observed the specific challenges that transfer student-athletes experience. The first author conducted the study as a doctoral dissertation project.

To address potential bias in understanding the data, several strategies were employed. Interviews were audio recorded and notes were taken to document any non-verbal reactions or expressions made by the participants. Analytic memos documented observations, comments, and
questions that arose during the interviews. Participants were given a transcript of their interview and allowed to make edits to their answers. The first author employed a constant comparison method to analyze data throughout data collection (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyze interview transcripts and analytic memos. This data was entered into the qualitative analysis software, Dedoose (2016) where individual pieces of data, or open codes, were flagged for further analysis (Charmaz, 2014). In total, 46 codes were used to label 2,168 pieces of data. These codes were reviewed by the first and second authors for consistency and clarity.

Coded data was sorted, arranged by level of frequency, and separated during further analysis. As patterns or frequent codes emerged during collection and analysis, the first and second authors met weekly to review the codes, create a code definition log, and refine and reorganize the data collected. This micro-analysis allowed the authors to group and sort similar data from varying sources into larger groups (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Focused and axial coding principles (Charmaz, 2014) were then used to identify what information was less relevant to the research questions and to link categories of coded information together. Major themes, subthemes, and patterns within data were identified using a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014). At various points in which the conceptual model was created, member checking was completed with three participants to show them an example of the model that was developing and allow them to provide feedback on the model (Given, 2012). Data saturation was reached following the completion of 15 interviews.

Results

As noted, there were 15 participants, representing 30% of the CC transfers at the research site at the time of data collection. As presented in Table 1, nine (60.0%) were male, eight (53.3%) received scholarships, and 12 (80.0%) completed a 2-4 transfer to the research site. Also, the most common (n=4; 26.7%) participant sport was football, and white (n=6; 40.0%) was the most endorsed category of race and ethnicity.

The data analysis process resulted in the coding of 1,402 pieces of data, which were grouped into five primary themes and 18 subthemes. Using a grounded theory approach, from the emergent themes and subthemes, the Community College Transfer Student-Athlete Model (CCTSAM) was developed, represented in Figure 1. These themes were interrelated and reciprocal. The primary themes and sub-themes undergird the CCSTAM are presented below.

The CCTSAM provides a visual representation of the way that participants of this study explained the community college student-athlete transfer experience. The model maintains the student-athletes themselves as the arrow that enters the CC, traversing toward transfer to DI. As the student moves through the CC environment itself, participants comparably distinguished three constructs that occurred while at CCs. These themes, The Role of Relationships, “Doing Whatever It Takes” to Persevere Through, and Blind Spots: Navigating an Unclear Path, are illustrated by three trapezoids. Arrows between figures reference relationships between constructs. Finally, as the student-athlete moves out of CC to DI, participants identified a sense of uncertainty described in the theme Between Two Worlds: The Ambiguity of Transition.

Theme #1- Community College Culture

Though the experiences of student-athletes are unique, the culture of CCs themselves played an influential role in each participant’s ability to successfully transfer to a university and was present throughout the transfer experience. Theme #1: Community College Culture, describes the overall environmental factors of CCs which participants discussed. The data
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Demographic Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aden</td>
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<td>Sophia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tony</td>
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</table>

collected from participants in this theme was not specific to the student-athlete experience and referenced challenges that all CC students face.

**Benefits of Community College.** Several participants commented that they received several benefits from attending a CC. Compared to the four-year institution, CCs provided participants the means to academically, athletically, and socially prepare for university academia and DI athletics competition. Thomas references, “The JC², is like a good introduction to what college is going to be.” Additionally, the CC was viewed as a place where participants could get a ‘second chance’ to compete at a high level of competition. Particularly for those whose initial eligibility was a ‘non-qualifier’ and for 4-2-4 transfers, the CC provided a space where they could regain the ability to compete at DI and complete a bachelor’s degree.

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² Though many schools have transitioned away from the term “junior college” toward community college, Junior College, JC, or JuCo are terms commonly used by student-athletes.
Figure 1.
Community College Transfer Student-Athlete Model

COMMUNITY COLLEGE CULTURE
- Benefits of Community College
- The Struggle is Real™: Challenges at the Community College
- Community College Sigma
  ➔ Community College Reputation
- Academics at Community College
- Community College Athletics Competition

THE ROLE OF RELATIONSHIPS
- Coaches: The Gatekeepers
  ➔ Recruiting
  ➔ Academics
  ➔ Personal support
  ➔ Winning over well-being
- College Counselors
- Teammate Influences
- Family Supports

“DOING WHATEVER IT TAKES” TO PERSEVERE THROUGH
- Looking to the Future
- Athletics Kept Them Going
- “Beautiful Struggle”

BLIND SPOTS: NAVIGATING AN UNCLEAR PATH
- Overall Lack of Knowledge
- Sources of Information
  ➔ Community college staff
  ➔ Teammates as advisors
  ➔ Self-learned information
- Sacrifices Made
  ➔ Teammates who didn’t make it

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS: THE AMBIGUITY OF TRANSITION
- Emotions in Transition
- Influence on 4-Year Decision
  ➔ “Starting Over”
- University Transition
- Athletic Transition
- Social Transition

Student-Athlete
### Table 2

**Thematic Findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community College Culture</td>
<td>Benefits of Community College</td>
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<td>“The Struggle is Real”: Challenges at the Community College</td>
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<td>Community College Stigma</td>
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<td>Coaches: The Gatekeepers</td>
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<td>“Doing Whatever It Takes” to Persevere</td>
<td>Looking to the Future</td>
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<td>Through</td>
<td>Athletics Kept Them Going</td>
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<td>“Beautiful Struggle”</td>
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<td>Blind Spots: Navigating an Unclear Path</td>
<td>Overall Lack of Knowledge</td>
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<td>- Self-learned information</td>
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<td>Sacrifices Made</td>
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<td>- Teammates who didn’t make it</td>
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<td>Between Two Worlds: The Ambiguity of</td>
<td>Emotions in Transition</td>
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<td>Transition</td>
<td>Influence on 4-Year Decision</td>
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<td>“Starting Over”</td>
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<td>- Athletic transition</td>
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<td>- Social transition</td>
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*The Struggle is Real: Challenges at the Community College.* There were also many disadvantages of CC attendance. Participants reported that due to limited athletic scholarship opportunities, many had to find ways to financially support themselves or go without. Aden stated, “There’s no help, it’s hard to survive… I was struggling with money, sometimes I didn’t eat.” Financial hardship also influenced participants’ ability to balance...
academic and athletic responsibilities. Further, participants recounted difficulty engaging with CC campuses because of the lack of school spirit or institutional pride. The attitude of CC peers was that they were not as committed and were struggling to find a sense of what was next. For athletes, “You go in there, you handle your business, and you get out”, said Sebastian.

**Community College Stigma.** As found in prior research, participants reported a negative stigma around CC attendance. For student-athletes, this stigma is multi-layered because they felt they were both considered academically and athletically inadequate to go straight to a four-year university. This stigma was carried on as participants transferred to DI. Participants felt that they were not taken as seriously or good enough by their new teammates and coaches. John, a 4-2-4 transfer, labeled his time at the CC as, “a big downgrade” from his first four-year institution.

**Community College Reputation.** Despite the negative stigma of CC, several participants reported that their decision to attend a specific CC was influenced by the reputation of its history of transfer success for both academics and athletics. If a CC was reported to have a good transfer reputation, participants felt more confident that the time they spent at the CC would be well-spent and help them ultimately transfer. Several participants opted to commute long distances to attend CCs with positive reputations.

**Academics at Community College.** One of the greatest challenges participants noted was the ability to stay academically motivated at the CC. Sebastian and Shea, each a 2-4 transfer, noticed that class attendance significantly declined after the first financial aid disbursement date passed and the semester continued. Course transferability and remedial coursework were also deterrent academic factors that made it challenging for participants to stay motivated to complete academic coursework. Participants perceived CC faculty to be more lenient in grading and more willing to help students succeed. Participants recognized the direct connection between academic and athletic success at CCs. "If they (student-athletes) don’t have the grades, they simply can’t transfer,” said Thomas.

**Community College Athletics Competition.** Participants illustrated two contrasting pictures of the level of competition in CC athletics. First, participants identified that some of their CC teammates did not intend to transfer to a four-year institution. These athletes treated CC athletics like an extracurricular activity, conflicting with the transfer goals among the study participants. This lackadaisical attitude found among many student-athletes further supports the perception that CC athletics are not competitive. At institutions with a strong reputation for athletic transfer, the level of competition was heightened as participants understood the great impact that their play could hold on their future athletic and academic careers. “At JuCo, you make a play or you’re not playing football ever again,” said Luke, a football player. Tony, another football player went as far as to say that “JuCo football is really dangerous” because of the magnified pressure that athletes feel to secure DI transfer and further their athletic careers.

**Theme #2- The Role of Relationships**

Participants shared that the relationships they maintained at CC were the most influential component of successful transfer. Participants attempting to transfer must rely on the information communicated to them by CC coaches, counselors, teammates, and family members.
**Coaches: The Gatekeepers.** Participants saw CC coaches as gatekeepers of information regarding NCAA rules and access to the four-year coaching staff.

**Recruitment.** Participants conveyed how they relied on their CC coaches’ expertise in both athletics and recruitment as they navigated potential transfer opportunities. CC students are often recruited to play at the DI level based on the position needs of a four-year athletic program. Each year, “DI schools are only looking for maybe two JuCo’s [players] a year,” estimated football player Luke. Therefore, the exposure and experience a CC student-athlete receives at the CC is critical. Further, the mutual professional relationships of CC and DI coaches influence a participant’s ability to be ‘seen’ by a DI program. Several participants credited their CC coach for introducing them to coaches at DI programs.

**Academics.** CC coaches were perceived by participants as the staff members most familiar with NCAA academic transfer rules. Further, CC coaches re-emphasized that participants must first be eligible to transfer academically if their motivation was to compete for a DI school. CC Coaches who did not have detailed information about academic transfer eligibility also advocated for greater support from counseling staff.

**Personal support.** Because of the amount of time spent with participants, CC coaches also commonly served as sources of personal support. Sid, Sophia, and Jamaal each related their CC coaches as ‘second parents,’ helping them balance academic, athletic, and personal challenges. Rachel even went as far as to say that her CC coaches were, “life-changing people.” A positive relationship with the CC coaching staff had a direct connection to the way participants perceived their transfer experience.

**Winning over well-being.** Participants who did not recount a positive experience with CC coaches, felt that they were dispensable unless they could athletically perform. Aden, a 2-4 football player who struggled academically, believed his CC coaches did not begin building a relationship with him until after he successfully transferred to a DI school because they initially felt he “wasn’t going to get it.”

**College Counselors.** Second to CC coaches, participants expected college counselors to obtain and communicate knowledge of transfer requirements. Experience with counselors was varied by participants. At some CCs, the athletics department had a dedicated counselor. Sid indicated that his counselor was so involved with the students that he “would have to try not to succeed.” Yet even with a dedicated athletics counselor, other students felt that the information communicated to them about academic transfer eligibility was unclear or incorrect. Chris and Thomas, who attended the same CC, reported conflicting information, such as the need to earn an Associate’s degree. Like CC coaches, participants developed relationships beyond athletics and academics with counselors, turning to those individuals when they needed personal support.

**Teammate Influences.** As information from CC coaches and counselors were not consistently reliable, participants turned to each other for information and support. In comparison to the team dynamics at the four-year institution, 2-4 transfers Shea and Chris felt they enjoyed much stronger bonds with their CC teammates. Jamaal, an African-American football player, stated that his teammates created a sense of belonging at his CC as there were not many underrepresented students outside of the athletics department. The strength in the relationships of teammates resulted in accountability on the field, in the classroom, and to achieve transfer goals.

**Family Support.** Support from family members, both emotional and financial, was recalled by many participants. For participants not receiving an athletic scholarship, parental and family financial support was an advantage in comparison to teammates who had to work to
financially support their education. Family members sometimes attempted to interpret academic transfer rules and/or the recruiting when participants failed to get support from CC coaches or counselors.

**Theme #3- “Doing Whatever It Takes” to Persevere Through**

At each participant’s core was a determination and persistence to fight through the adversities they faced. Participants referenced attitudinal and behavioral traits that helped them overcome obstacles during the transfer process. Jamaal described this mental toughness as having, “a dominant mindset.”

**Looking to the Future.** A motivating factor for each of the participants was possessing long-term goals. Even though the path to university transfer was often unclear, they felt that if they continued to work hard and stay positive, “something better would come my way.” Even though participants valued the time spent at a CC (as referenced in Theme #1, Community College Culture), John a 2-4 transfer stated, “The name of the game is trying to get out.” For many participants, the long-term goals of transfer caused them to work harder than others in the classroom and on the field.

Participants used goal setting to stay motivated at the CC. Achieving the next step of university transfer was also seen as a necessary process for their professional careers. Rachel, Tony, and John felt athletics was a means to help set themselves up for a future career in which a bachelor’s degree was required. For some participants, particularly male athletes, professional athletics opportunities were also considered. Putting themselves in a position to be draft eligible was a motivating factor to fight through adversity.

**Athletics Kept Them Going.** All participants identified that athletic participation, over academics, was the greater motivating factor for university transfer. “I think if it weren’t for athletics, I would not have gone very far,” stated Shea. Athletics was a common motivating factor for participants to perform well academically, understanding that they could not compete or transfer if their grades were not sufficient. The additional rules surrounding academic competition were safeguards for ensuring academic success. Participants detailed additional efforts, such as increased study hours and attending faculty office hour appointments, which they took advantage of because of their intense commitment to maintaining academic eligibility.

Beyond the CC, the potential for an athletic scholarship at the DI level also provided financial opportunities. Many participants who earned a DI scholarship indicated that they would not have been able to financially attend a four-year university if it were not for the athletic scholarship received. For participants who did not have an athletic scholarship at the DI institution, the hope and opportunity to earn a scholarship in the future contributed to their motivation to succeed.

**“Beautiful Struggle”.** Despite the challenges faced at the CC, participants reflected they would not change their academic and athletic history. Jamaal described his CC experience as, “a beautiful struggle. It was hard, but the good times outweigh the bad.” The transfer experience forced several participants to mature personally, engage in self-reflection, and reinforced their ability to work hard to achieve their goals. Aden and Rachel described their CC tenures as stories of resilience, which ultimately carried on into their overall sense of self beyond academics and athletics. Both Jamaal and Shea identified that at CC, they learned how to ask for help when needed. Shea shared, “I wouldn't be the person I am today without junior college.”
Theme #4- Blind Spots: Navigating an Unclear Path

A strong and consistent emotion among participants was frustration as they encountered hurdle after hurdle in route to transfer. Not only were participants understanding university transfer requirements but also navigating NCAA DI transfer rules and regulations which heavily dictated their ability to further their athletic careers.

Overall Lack of Knowledge. Most participants were unable to distinguish what transfer rules were specific to university admission and which were specific to NCAA transfer. Even though the intent of transferring to a DI for athletics, there was a general lack of clarity in the rules, such as NCAA initial eligibility certification status or progress towards degree requirements, which enabled transfer. For students like Jamaal and Chris, 2-4 transfers, this lack of information caused them to initially take a relaxed attitude toward classes at CC. Jamaal failed to pass a needed CC Math course which set back his transfer by a full semester.

Sources of Information. In many cases, participants sought out information about the NCAA transfer process from multiple sources. The information received from these various sources is often confused. "People are telling you different things everywhere," said Aden.

Community college staff. For most student-athletes, the CC coaching staff was often the first point of contact for questions surrounding university transfer. As referenced in Theme #2, “The Role of Relationships," a CC coach’s knowledge and willingness to share accurate information about university transfer was found to be influential. Counselors, both those serving the general student population and student-athlete-specific populations, frequently possessed limited information to share beyond fulfilling CC requirements. "They were just trying to get me my A.A., they don’t really care about anything else," claimed John, a 4-2-4 transfer.

Teammates as advisors. Participants often turned to their teammates for information about the transfer. This information is passed down from those successful in transfer, and those who are going through the transfer process. Daniel, a 2-4 transfer, recounted that counselors failed to notify him that a dropped math course would nullify his ability to transfer. Daniel’s transfer was only possible because he had taken the advice of a teammate to add another course that would fulfill the same requirement.

Self-learned information. Because participants were unable to find accurate and concise information on transfer requirements, they often needed to interpret the NCAA rules themselves. Participants turned to Google and other online websites to learn what classes to complete and what grades they had to earn. Aden, a 2-4 transfer, took the self-learned information to the CC counselors for verification and was met with uncertainty. His counselor responded, "I think you're right," reinforcing the overall lack of knowledge that both counselors and student-athletes have about transfer. Becca and Kendall, both 4-2-4 transfers, discussed how they had to learn the rules on their own and make their best guesses on which classes would transfer between multiple schools. Kendall advised, “You have to do the research yourself first."

Sacrifices Made. Due to the lack of knowledge participants possessed about the transfer, they often found themselves in situations where they were at a deficit. Many participants reported semesters with large academic course loads to rectify academic deficiencies. For some, remedial Math or English courses also contributed to their schedules. Several participants even attended classes at multiple institutions concurrently to ensure that they were able to get the courses needed.
Because participants were using their athletic ability as a leverage point to transfer, the timing of when they could transfer was extremely important. In general, if a student-athlete is offered an athletic scholarship at a four-year institution to begin at a particular semester, that scholarship is not guaranteed beyond that time if the student-athlete fails to meet transfer requirements. Therefore, if a student-athlete fails to transfer in a time agreed upon by the four-year institution, they would likely have to either begin the recruitment process over or lose the ability to earn a scholarship or roster spot. This was experienced by Rachel, a 2-4 transfer, whose athletic scholarship offer and subsequent admission to a university was revoked after she failed to meet one of the transfer requirements.

Even after successful transfer, participants reported they had to make continued academic sacrifices at the four-year institution to meet NCAA DI continuing eligibility requirements (NCAA Bylaw 14.4.3.5). Some participants were forced to choose between their desired academic program or athletic eligibility at the DI. John recounted that at the CC, DI coaches promised him that he could get into, "whatever major you want... as long as you have an AA." However, when he arrived at the DI, a DI counselor informed him otherwise and he was forced to change his academic degree plan if he wanted to compete on the baseball team.

**Teammates who didn't make it.** The reality of transfer is that some fail. Commonly, CC student-athletes do not transfer to a four-year institution. Aden, a football athlete, stated, "I'm the only one that got a scholarship out of 80 players" on his CC team. Participants felt that teammates either did not possess the motivation and tenacity in overcoming the obstacles or that counselors made academic advising mistakes that teammates did not have enough time to fix.

**Theme #5- Between Two Worlds: The Ambiguity of Transition**

Like non-athlete peers, there is a period between institutions where participants struggled to find a sense of belonging. This theme explored the participants’ reflections and experiences post-transfer.

**Emotions in Transition.** Participants reported a variety of emotions when reflecting on transfer; excitement, joy, frustration, anxiety, a sense of accomplishment, and ultimately relief. Chris and Sebastian related the period between the CC and DI as some of the most stressful days of their lives, afraid that something would derail their success up until their admission offers and scholarship agreements were signed. Rachel, whose previous transfer attempt was obstructed, no longer felt anger or frustration, but an overwhelming sense of pride that she had the grit and determination needed to persist through her hardships. The 4-2-4 participants experienced additional insecurity that they would not have what it takes to get back to a DI university. Becca expressed, "It was like a big weight was taken off my shoulders," when she was able to get back to a four-year school.

**Influence on a 4-year Decision.** Unlike the general student population, participants were willing to go to a wide range of DI institutions since athletic participation was the leading motivation for transfer. Rachel, a 2-4 transfer, stated she was willing to “transfer anywhere.” Further, in collegiate athletics, it is not uncommon for student-athletes to transfer outside of the traditional Fall semester admission period. Finally, the NCAA places calendar limitations on when DI coaches can actively recruit potential players, which provides limited opportunity for student-athletes to plan their future paths. Thomas and Luke, transferred in the Spring term, with less than three weeks from the conclusion of the Fall semester at the CC and the beginning of the
Spring semester at the DI. Luke stated, “I’ve never been more stressed in my life…I knew I was going to have a home, but I didn’t know what home it was.”

“Starting Over”. Participants reported that once at the DI, they needed to acclimate to the university itself, their new team, and a new social environment. The transition between a CC and a DI was found to be very challenging for 2-4 transfer students like Rachel and Shea. Rachel, "didn't think that it would be different."

University transition. In contrast to the experiences at the CC, participants reported that their main points of contact during the transition were the DI coaching staff. Thirteen of the 15 participants relocated to attend the university, therefore the DI coaches also facilitated housing opportunities. Though the academic support at the four-year institution was greater than what was received at the CC, participants still experienced frustration post-transfer when they learned that courses completed did not transfer, or that they would not be NCAA academically eligible to complete a desired major program. John chose to change his academic major to be able to athletically compete, however post-transfer, he wished he had more time to consider this choice.

Athletic transition. When joining their new teams, many participants described the need to “prove their worth” to new DI teammates and identify their roles on new teams. Sebastian described this experience as, “being both a rookie and a veteran.” Similarly, Chris struggled early on because she “didn’t know if I was supposed to lead or not…You’re in a very awkward spot.” Participants, although recruited, still had to earn playing time in their respective sports.

Social transition. The demands of being a DI student-athlete were reported to be greater than the demands at the CC. Transfer student-athletes often jump into teams and programs where they have no existing relationships, leading to feelings of isolation. Sid described that at the CC, student-athletes could balance academics, athletics, and social life. However, at the DI, he felt that he could only pick two of those things and sacrifice the third.

Discussion

Findings of this study indicate that a successful CC to DI transfer can be a complex, multi-layered, and often confusing process for student-athletes. The findings of this study provide practitioners, researchers, and student-athletes a better understanding of the barriers student-athletes face, the key stakeholders and support systems involved, the information they need, and how they persist to DI. As indicated by the CCTASM (Figure 1), Theme #1: Community College Culture encompasses most of the model as the CCs themselves were found to have an overarching influence on participants' experiences as indicated by arrows extending to subsequent themes. Theme #2: The Role of Relationships, Theme #3: “Doing Whatever It Takes” To Persevere Through, and Theme #4: Blind Spots: Navigating an Unclear Path represent processes that occurred prior to Division I transfer. Again, arrows interconnecting the themes represent their reciprocal relationships. Finally, the arrow representing Theme #5: Between Two Worlds: The Ambiguity of Transition exists both within and outside of Theme #1: Community College Culture to represent the emotions, perceptions, and experiences internalized by participants both during their time at the CC and DI institutions.

The Process of Transfer

A guiding framework used in the design of this study was Transfer Student Capital (Laanan et al., 2011) which asserts that students must know about transfer to successfully execute transfer. Theme #4, Blind Spots: Navigating an Unclear Path represents both
institutional and NCAA policy barriers student-athletes did not anticipate. Addressing RQ1, these were barriers impacting the process of transfer outside the student-athlete’s control. Participants confirmed confusion about the transfer process; at the CC, in transition, and at the DI (Burgess & Cisneros, 2018; Fletcher et al., 2003; Libadisos et al., 2016; Neault & Piland, 2014). Confusion on course articulation and how courses would fulfill either admission or eligibility requirements commonly arose. Participants reported that CC counselors were unavailable, ineffective, or inaccurate, particularly when there was no one dedicated to the athletics department. Therefore, participants frequently made a conscious decision not to utilize counselors, as referenced by Theme #2: The Role of Relationships. As a result of the information that either was not communicated- or was not communicated clearly, student-athletes repeatedly find themselves in situations where they need to rectify either admission or NCAA transfer deficiencies (Iino, 2014; Libadisos et al., 2016).

CCs should ensure that there are counselors who have received extensive training on NCAA transfer legislation. By attending forums, like NCAA Regional Rules or N4A conventions, a designated transfer-trained counselor could liaise and distribute necessary transfer information to their institution. The contact information for transfer-trained counselors should be publicly available for student-athletes, coaches, and representatives from transfer schools. By providing clear and direct contact with a transfer counselor, this recommendation would address the challenges participants reported in Theme #4: Blind Spots- Navigating an Unclear Path, and those identified by Transfer Student Capital (Laanan et al., 2011). The current composition of the NCAA Committee on Academics Policies and Procedures (NCAA, 2023d) does not mandate the presence of a CC representative. To ensure that concerns of the transfer population are addressed and considered, it would be beneficial for a CC representative to be included.

Findings from the present study underscore the need for student-athletes for continual support pre- and post-transfer, as indicated by Theme #5: Between Two Worlds- The Ambiguity of Transition. Liminality Theory (Turner, 1969) posits that during a rite of passage, people leave an identity behind for a new one. This was evidenced by the need for study participants to ‘start over’ at the DI institution. Like their non-athlete peers student-athletes sought out other transfer students for support at the four-year (Libadisos et al., 2016). Transfer students have described the first semester at Division I as a “semester of struggle” (Burgess & Cisneros, 2018). Though student-athletes have left the CC, transition continues through to the university. Support services, specific to the academic, emotional, and athletic needs of student-athletes should be carefully reviewed and/or implemented at each DI institution. Rather than viewing transfer as a step-by-step process, universities should view it as a continuum, where there is collaboration and communication between CCs and DI institutions. Cross-training between CCs and four-year institutions would provide administrators and counselors with further understanding of the multi-layered rules and regulations that surround student-athlete transfer as well as a holistic understanding of the challenges that student-athletes may face.

Relationships & Sources of Information

As reflected in the CCTSAM, there was a connection between the process in which students understood transfer, and the people surrounding them who provided support. CC coaches, counselors, teammates, and family members were critical in understanding the “Blind Spots” student-athletes encountered. The Role of Relationships, Theme #2: The Role of Relationships, presented in the first trapezoid, emerged as the most important component of successful transfer. The existence of support systems at CCs was expected, however the degree to which the relationships with support systems affected students was unexpected. These
relationships informed RQ2, regarding where information was attained, as well as RQ3, the role athletics plays in transfer. Consistent with findings by Davies and Dickman (1998), participants who reported positive relationships at the CC (with coaches, counselors, teammates, or families) were found to have an overall positive perception of community college. Relationships with CC coaches were identified as the most dynamic as they acted as gatekeepers on multiple levels; athletic opportunity, athletic performance, DI recruitment, and academic transfer rules. While previous literature has explored the CC coach and student-athlete relationship (Carodine et al., 2001; Comeaux, 2015), the present study suggests that these relationships are much more significant than previously explored. Consistent with previous research suggesting that coaches provide academic support for students (Burgess & Cisneros, 2018; Huml et al., 2019; Iino, 2014, Woltring et al., 2021), this study also found that CC coaches were seen as trusted sources of academic information, particularly when participants felt distrust of the CC counselors.

Second to coaches, as reflected in the CCTSAM, relationships with counselors are vitally important. While the role of CC counselors is well documented (Allen et al., 2013; Davies & Dickman, 1998), there is limited research on the student-athlete/counselor relationship (Broughton & Neyer, 2001; Woltring et al., 2021). Like the general population, best practices for CC counselors include intrusive advising practices; engaging with students outside of advising sessions, engaging in conversation about non-academic issues, and frequent monitoring of academic performance (Varney, 2012). Without specialized training, CC counselors who guide student-athletes, without athletic eligibility in mind, may do these students a disservice (Rubin & Lewis, 2020). Allen et al. (2013) and Rubin & Lewis (2020) suggested it is the responsibility of counselors to know and educate students on transfer rules. Consistent with research by Tobolowsky and Cox (2012), this study found there is a critical need to educate counselors on policies outside of institutional regulation, like NCAA academic eligibility. As referenced above, the authors recommend that each CC identify and train a dedicated transfer counselor to work with student-athletes. This individual would be responsible for educating student-athletes and coaches on transfer rules and regulations, supporting Themes #2: The Role of Relationships and #4: Blind Spots- Navigating an Unclear Path in the CCTSAM.

The need for proper academic advising becomes tantamount in the recruitment timeline, where student-athletes may lose their ability to transfer and compete at a DI school if academic requirements are not fulfilled. As this study’s findings suggest in Theme #2: The Role of Relationships, the lack of effective academic advising sometimes necessitated the need for participants to look to teammates, family members, or other external sources for support and guidance (Swingle & Salinas, 2020). The importance of relationships with CC coaches and counselors inform the process in which transfer occurs (RQ1) and provides critical insight as to how communication surrounding transfer can improve. Participants indicated in Theme #4: Blind Spots- Navigating an Unclear Path that the information received surrounding NCAA transfer eligibility and transfer admission was insufficient. In addition to the resources provided by the NCAA (2023c) it would be beneficial to have supplemental documents for coaches/administrators and student-athletes to identify and detail potential barriers to DI transfer. This would alleviate any future ‘Blind Spot’ that a student-athlete may face.

Intrapersonal Commitment & Dedication

Central to student-athlete transfer is the motivation and dedication of student-athletes themselves, as represented by Theme #3: “Doing Whatever It Takes” to Persevere Through. As in previous research, athletics participation was a strong motivating factor for DI transfer (Burgess & Cisneros, 2018; Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Harper et al., 2009; Libadisos et al.,
Participants credited academic progress to athletic eligibility, understanding that if they wanted to keep competing in their sport, they needed to be academically eligible to transfer. A positive relationship between athletics and academics (Broughton & Neyer, 2001; Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Harper et al., 2009; Kissinger et al., 2011) resulted in students taking extra courses, seeking academic support, and taking greater control of their own academic experiences at the community college. As illustrated in this theme, participants demonstrated dedication and perseverance on and off the field.

Though athletics has been seen as a distraction to education (Carodine et al., 2001; Jolly, 2008), this study found the opposite. Practitioners should recognize that athletics may be a catalyst for transfer, rather than a barrier. Student-athletes make decisions on their academic and athletic careers with athletics as a motivating factor. In this study, participants reported commuting great distances, and even relocating, to attend a community college that had both a strong record of university transfer and a high level of athletic competition. This indicates that the reputation of a CC’s athletics and academics, as identified in Theme #1: Community College Culture, can have a great impact on the quality of student-athletes they attract to their institutions. Like the general student population, CCs should publicly disclose their transfer student-athlete success rate. This would both hold the institutions responsible for poor transfer success and recognize those who are implementing practices that promote student-athlete transition.

Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

In this study all participants were successful in DI transfer. Exploration into the factors that influenced student-athletes who were unsuccessful in transfer is needed to gain a greater understanding of the student-athlete CC to DI process. Building on Kramer’s (2023) research on DII male student-athletes, further research should also explore DII, DIII, and non-NCAA member institutions whose differing rules and regulations may result in developing a more holistic understanding of student-athlete transfer.

Three of the 15 participants in this study were 4-2-4 transfers. Though their experiences were similar to those of 2-4 transfers, nuances of 4-2-4 transfer exist. For 4-2-4 transfers, the entire duration spent at a CC was found to be a liminal period of transition (Turner, 1969) with athletics serving as a primary motivation for transfer (Swingle & Salinas, 2020). Since the implementation of the NCAA Transfer Portal and ratification of the one-time transfer exception (NCAA Bylaw 14.5.5.2.10) in 2021, the need for 4-2-4 transfer has yet to be explored, particularly for revenue-generating sports where transfer is highly publicized. Future research on this subpopulation is recommended. Additionally, participants identified the timing of transfer as a critical component of athletic eligibility and successful transfer. Further exploration of the way in which NCAA recruiting limitations, allowable contact windows, and mid-year transfer support or inhibit DI transfer is recommended.

Data collection and analysis were conducted without regard to athletic scholarship, initial eligibility certification, sport participation or revenue-generating status, and race/ethnicity—further focus on specific subpopulations may uncover unique observations or perceptions, providing a more contextualized picture of 2-4 or 4-2-4 transfer. No longitudinal information, such as university grade point average or persistence to graduation was examined. Expanding on Transfer Student Capital (Laanan et al., 2011) measurement of cognitive outcomes over time could provide greater detail effectiveness of CCs in preparing students for university academics. Though the NCAA and member institutions provide public resources surrounding the transfer process, a further document review of what information could be added to these documents to
clarify transfer requirements and expectations for student-athletes, for counselors, and other administrative or athletic support staff.

Finally, the athlete/coach relationship has been found to be significant in academics, athletics and recruiting. Concurrent with Iino’s (2014) findings on the multiple roles that athletic coaches take on at CCs, the role in which they play in DI transfer, and further examination of the roles and interactions with students warrants future research. Exploration on CC coaches’ education and knowledge of academic and NCAA transfer rules, as well as the relationships with students at CC could provide strong insight into the transfer success and failures of the athletes they work with.

Conclusion

Using a grounded theory approach, the current study developed a model that explored the CC to DI transfer student-athlete experience. The findings suggest that several factors, both within and outside of the student-athletes control, influence one's ability to transfer and compete at NCAA DI level. Using the CCTSAM, student-athletes can identify and recognize that their own intrinsic ability to overcome obstacles is needed to navigate academic and athletic barriers. Counseling, administrative and athletics staff at the CCs can utilize these findings to examine the overall culture and quality of relationships maintained with student-athletes, as this was found to be a critical factor that positively influenced the student-athlete experience. Finally, this research highlights that a shared responsibility between counseling and athletic staffs at both CCs and universities is needed to support transfer student-athletes.

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## Appendix

### Research Question Matrix

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<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interview Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>**RQ1: What is the process of how student-athletes successfully transfer from</td>
<td>Q12. Let’s talk about your experiences in the time frame between attending community college and university. What emotions were you experiencing in this time?</td>
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<td>community college to a Division I university?</td>
<td>Q11. Once you had decided that you were going to transfer, was it an easy process? Did you have any challenges making it here (to the four-year institution)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Guided by Liminality Theory</td>
<td>Q10. If you could go back as a community college student, discuss what (if anything) you wish you would have known or would have done differently.</td>
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<td>Q15. Describe what it felt like, having finished at the community college, without knowing what school you were going to transfer to?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Q17. Do you feel that you are now in a position to attain your athletic and academic goals?</td>
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<td>Q3. Describe the person you were (or you perceived yourself to be) at the community college in three words.</td>
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<td>Q19. Can you describe the person you are now that you have transferred.</td>
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<td>**RQ2: How do student-athletes attain knowledge or information on transfer</td>
<td>Q4. Discuss what you knew at that time about NCAA transfer requirements?</td>
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<td>requirements?</td>
<td>Q5. What about university admission/transfer requirements?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Guided by Transfer Student Capital</td>
<td>Q6. Do you feel that the information you received about transferring to a four-year was accurate?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Q7. Think back about where you got this information from, can you remember who told</td>
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you about these requirements (coaches, academic advisors, teammates)?

Q13. Tell me about any additional guidance you received regarding academic and/or athletic requirements once you decided to transfer.

Q14. Who did you reach out to when you had questions after you left the CC and before you enrolled here?

Q8. Were you recruited by coaches to play at the university? Would you have attended this university if you were not recruited for athletics?

Q9. When you think back, was academics or athletics the main driver in deciding to transfer?

Q17. Do you feel that you are now in a position to attain your athletic and academic goals?

Q1. Tell me about your experience as a student-athlete at your community college?

Q2. Discuss some of the pros and cons of being a community college student-athlete.

Q16. Overall, do you believe that attending the community college prepared you for the four-year institution?

Q18. If you could give advice to current community college student-athletes, trying to transfer to a four-year school, what advice would you give?