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# Leisure Experiences and Social Support Systems of Latino College Students with DACA Status

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LEISURE EXPERIENCES AND SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS OF LATINO
COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH DACA STATUS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the leisure experiences of undocumented Latino young adults in order to note any potential links between leisure experience and success in reaching higher education. This population faces a unique set of challenges in their transition to adulthood and their pursuit of and access to higher education. Research suggests that three common factors among undocumented young adults who have been successful in reaching higher education are extra familial mentors, positive social supports, and supplementary educational programming. This study used the three factors related to success in transition to higher education and the principles of contact theory to examine leisure experiences of undocumented young adults. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven undocumented young adults over the age of 18 who are enrolled in higher education. Due to the difficulty accessing this population, snowball sampling was used beginning with a volunteer database from the Greenville Hispanic Alliance. The data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically. Three themes emerged from the data including (1) experiences of constraint to higher education; (2) leisure constraint negotiation, leading to the three support system factors mentioned above; (3) constraint to leisure participation severely increase after high school graduation leading to a severe drop off in of leisure and recreation participation. The results support previous literature that has identified constraints this population faces when striving for higher education, as well as disadvantaged population's capacity for leisure constraint negotiation. Implications of the study and a framework for future research are discussed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER

Table of Contents (Continued)

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

**Overview**

This chapter provides an introduction to research literature relevant to this study. An introduction to the population, information about leisure, recreation and sport in social change; and a description of the proposed theoretical base of this study are covered. Gaps in existing literature are identified. The purpose of this study and the research questions are stated.

**Introduction**

Young adults without legal immigration status often experience oppression under immigration law in the US (Mendez-Shannon, 2010). Many of these undocumented students, particularly those between high school graduation and higher education, were brought to the US by parents or relatives at a young age and now live under extreme oppression without access to continuing education (Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Mendez-Shannon, 2010; Olivas, 2009; Perez, 2010). Even though higher education could be much more accessible in their country of origin, leaving their families and moving back is often culturally stressful due to family-centered values (Dennis, Basañez & Farahmand, 2010). Returning to their country of origin, they may not have a social support network or a full understanding of local cultural values or idioms, depending on their time in the US (Mendez-Shannon, 2010). Undocumented young adults who apply to institutions of

higher education may find laws and constraints related to their enrollement vary from state to state, though the anti-immigrant sentiment is often pervasive (Olivas, 2009).

Recreation, sport and leisure have been used to create a space to cross social boundaries, dialogue and hope for understanding, collaborate, and work for systemic change (Carlin, 2008; Gomez &Hugo, 2010; Mandela, 2000; Wiltse, 2007). Nelson Mandela (2000) made clear that sport can play a role in creating more positive social realities. Högund and Sundberg (2008) point out that through the opportunity for "collective experience" of sport in South Africa, social lines could be crossed—that sport has the responsibility to contribute to peace building and reconciliation across diverse social boundaries.

Exposure to diverse populations earlier in life has been shown to influence the diversity of a person's social network and their tolerance for diversity throughout life (Emerson, Kimbro, &Yancy, 2002; Miller, 2002). Emerson et al. (2002) pointed out that the value of contact between social strata is important for increasing social capital, particularly for marginalized groups. Four stipulations for this increased social capital have been outlined as contact theory has developed. Emerson et al. (2002) outlined them as "common goals, intergroup cooperation, equal status, and authority support." Recreational therapists have used contact theory as a basis to examine the benefits of inclusive recreational activities for people with disabilities (Devine & O'Brien, 2007). Also, its impact has been examined with respect to gender equality (Lyras & Hums, 2009). However, there has been little research on the use of contact theory in recreational spaces to increase social awareness of the undocumented population. The fear of

revealing legal status in new and even familiar social settings that undocumented young adults experience could be a major constraint to this study (Contreras, 2009; Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, & Dedios Sanguineti, 2013; Mendez-Shannon, 2010; Perez, 2010).

    Little research exists that address the social benefits of leisure and recreation access for undocumented students. While there is research on lack of access to higher education for undocumented students, even in the states where undocumented students have access to higher education little is known about the social interactions of these students, particularly in leisure settings (Olivas, 2009; Mendez-Shannon, 2010). There is little research on how undocumented students currently recreate and what constraints influence their leisure choices. Improvements and program development intentionally created to facilitate interactions across social boundaries for undocumented students could be supported with this knowledge. In order to provide some structure around the population for this study, the qualifications for the executive order from June 2012 entitled Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals aimed at providing work permits to undocumented young adults in the US were used to select participants. Therefore, this study specifically focused on Latino undocumented students who are eligible, have applied, have, or have had a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) work permit.

## Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the leisure experiences of undocumented Latino young adults in order to note any potential links between leisure experience and success in reaching higher education.

## Research Questions

- How do undocumented young adults engage in recreation and leisure?

- With whom are undocumented young adults in contact in these settings?

    o What role do these people play in the lives of undocumented young adults?

- What is the perceived social climate in these leisure settings?

- What are the perceived constraints on their leisure?

- Are there any possible links between leisure experiences and enrollment and/or success in higher education?

## Definitions

**1st Generation:** Refers to the population of immigrants who experience the majority of their formative years in their country of origin before immigrating to the current country of residence.

**2nd Generation:** Refers to the population of children of the 1st Generation of immigrants in the current country of residence.

**1.5 Generation:** Term coined by Rubén Rumbaut in 1976 to describe the population of immigrants between the first and second generation (Rumbaut, 1976).

**DREAM Act:** Legislation held in Congress for over 10 years. If passed it would primarily provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented young adults and young adults with DACA status (Batalova & McHugh, 2010; Batalova & Mittelstadt, 2012; Flore, 2010).

**DACA:** Refers to the presidential memorandum entitled Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. This memorandum written by the Obama Administration in 2012 allows temporary protection from deportation, a work permit and access to a number of other resources (2012, June. Retrieved from https://www.dhs.gov/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals.). The eligibility requirements are listed in the literature review of this study. These eligibility requirements were used to define a population for sampling in this study. This study used "young adult with DACA status" interchangeably with "undocumented young adult."

**Undocumented:** Refers to a person with no permanent legal immigration status in the country of residence.

## Summary

This chapter introduced the population and their context. Contact theory, the proposed theoretical base of the study, was outlined. Gaps in previous research literature were briefly explained. The purpose and research questions were identified.  Definitions were listed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

**Overview**

This chapter outlines literature to contextualize this study. Background on undocumented young adults, their context and political environment are presented. The role of leisure, recreation and sport in social change is described. The proposed theory of this study is outlined in relationship to the leisure and recreation context. Gaps in the previous body of research literature are articulated.

**Literature Review**

**Undocumented Young Adults and Their Context**

**Who are the 1.5-generation?**

Dr. Rubén Rumbaut coined the term 1.5 generation in 1976, in a study about identity crisis in Cuban youth (Rumbaut, 1991; Rumbaut, 2004). The 1.5-generation falls between the first generation—those who were born in and experienced their formative years in their country of origin before immigrating to the US—and the second generation of US born children of immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Aligned more closely with the second generation, having experienced their formative years in the US, but being without citizenship, the lives of the 1.5-generation are not fully like those of the first or second generation (Abrego, 2006; Abrego, 2011; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Mendez-Shannon, 2010). Some of this population is eligible for protection from

deportation provided by Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals as detailed in the following section.

**DREAM Act and DACA.**

More than 1.9 million undocumented young people are in the United States according to the 2010 estimates in the Migration Policy Institute's report on potential beneficiaries of the pending DREAM Act. The DREAM Act is possible legislation that would provide a pathway to citizenship for this population, if passed. These individuals are younger than 30 years of age and were brought to the United States before their sixteenth birthday; they have resided in the US for at least five continuous years and have a high school diploma or GED (Batalova & McHugh, 2010). However, these young adults are simply potential beneficiaries of the DREAM act as it has been held in the legislative process for over ten years (Batalova & McHugh, 2010; Batalova & Mittelstadt, 2012; Flores, 2010). In response to this slow process, the Obama Administration issued a presidential memorandum entitled Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) directing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to use prosecutorial discretion for undocumented immigrants that came to the US as children and have no criminal records (2012, June. Retrieved from https://www.dhs.gov/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals.). A presidential memorandum, as declared by the US Department of Justice in January of 2009, holds the same weight as an executive order, which is equivalent to the weight of law. The Department of

Homeland Security (DHS) website explains the regulations for DACA laid out in response. Unlike the potential DREAM Act, DACA does not offer a pathway to citizenship. It does not give one legal status, and it does not forgive any past, present, or future unlawful presence in the US. The qualifications as listed on the DHS website require that potential individuals who may qualify:

1. Were under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012;

2. Came to the United States before reaching your 16th birthday;

3. Have continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007, up to the present time;

4. Were physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making your request for consideration of deferred action with USCIS;

5. Entered without inspection before June 15, 2012, or your lawful immigration status expired as of June 15, 2012;

6. Are currently in school, have graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from high school, have obtained a general education development (GED) certificate, or are an honorably discharged veteran of the Coast Guard or Armed Forces of the United States; and

7. Have not been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, three or more other misdemeanors, and do not otherwise pose a threat to national

security or public safety. (2012, June. Retrieved from

https://www.dhs.gov/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals.)

The Migration Policy Institute estimates that 1.76 million undocumented young people may be eligible for this type of work authorization (Batalova & Mittelstadt, 2012). The minimum age of application is currently 15 years old. For the purpose of this study, undocumented adults who have either graduated from high school, or have, or are pursuing a GED and are between the ages of 18 and 31 will be considered young adults. This study will specifically interview those who are eligible, or have had the DACA two-year work authorization and relief from deportation. Young adults with DACA status experience numerous challenges throughout their youth and adulthood as explained in the following section.

**From de facto legal to illegal, education, and emerging adulthood.**

Undocumented young adults are faced with a challenging transition that Gonzales (2011) described in his article "Learning to be Illegal." Under the provision of the *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) Supreme Court case, all undocumented children have the right to primary and secondary education, Kindergarten through 12th grade. This inherently allows for the protection of these minors from deportation and the realities of being undocumented. As found in numerous studies (Abrego, 2006; Abrego, 2011; Arbona, Olvera, Rodriguez, Hagan, Linares & Wiesner, 2010; Contreras, 2009; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Mendez-Shannon, 2010; Rumbaut, 2004), young people may not know they are

undocumented or understand the gravity of their situation until certain coming of age practices like getting a driver's license, applying to universities, or trying to get a job.

Without a social security number, many of these life markers are impossible in most states in the US. These challenges often create a time of distress and frustration in the lives of undocumented young people (Abrego, 2006; Abrego, 2011; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Contreras, 2009; Mendez-Shannon, 2010). It has been noted in the literature that this frustration could be a contributing factor to the high levels of dropout among undocumented high school students. Often, these dropouts are quoted as wondering what good it is to work hard in school if they cannot go any further with their education. Those who do continue on, struggle to enroll in and find funding for higher education. Even if undocumented students are successful in enrolling in higher education, financial hardships and increasing familial responsibilities may impact their ability to finish their degrees. Undocumented graduates often find that without a social security number and the growing national e-verify system, they might not find any higher-level jobs than what was available to them before their degree. These challenges often create frustration and a sense of hopelessness among undocumented young adults as they learn to cope with their illegality (Abrego, 2006; Abrego, 2011; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Contreras, 2009; Mendez-Shannon, 2010).

Several studies have shown that having supportive relationships with adult mentors outside the family; stable, positive community support networks; and regular participation in extracurricular supplementary educational programs have helped disadvantaged youth to cope with their situations and succeed in reaching higher

education (Abrego, 2008; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales &Ruiz, 2014; Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008; Smith, 2008; Staton-Salazar, 2001; Zhou, 2008). These three factors will be referred to throughout this study. Research particularly supports the need for extra-family mentorship for undocumented young adults striving for higher education (Abrego, 2008; Gonzales, 2011), and Portes and Fernandez-Kelly (2008) discuss the influence of school structures, extracurricular activity and teachers as mentors in influencing the educational success of disadvantaged immigrant youth. Gonzales (2011) named this time of learning to cope with their lack of immigration documentation 'the transition to illegality.' Essentially, it is the life phase in which undocumented students experience a heightened awareness of the constraints on their lives and futures based on their lack of legal status and then learn to cope and change their goals (Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012). Several qualitative studies investigating various life challenges and negotiation report quotes from participants that refer to leisure and recreation settings such as an informal football league as areas for networking and stress relief (Gonzales, 2011; Gleeson & Gonzales, 2012; Mendez-Shannon, 2010). Yet, no research could be found on how leisure activities might help foster these relationships and supportive networks for undocumented young people. State legislation impacts undocumented young adults in various ways including availability of time for leisure and recreation activity as explained in the following section.

**Impact of State Legislation**

State legislation can greatly impact these students' educational experience as well as their transition to and ability to cope with their illegal status (Flores, 2010; Gandar & Contreras, 2009; Olivas, 2009). California, for example, is home to one of the largest populations of undocumented young adults and has passed their own version of the DREAM Act (Gonzales, 2011; Flores, 2010; Olivas, 2009). With the passing of Act AB 540 these undocumented young adults can pay in-state tuition and are eligible for financial aid (Flores, 2010; Olivas, 2009). Only a handful of states have laws such as this, supporting the higher education of undocumented students. The Migration Policy Institute's report estimates that South Carolina may have less than 1,000 eligible applicants for DACA. South Carolina also has some of the most restrictive educational laws regarding undocumented students in higher education (Batalova & McHugh, 2010; Batalova & Mittelstadt, 2012). The South Carolina Illegal Immigration Reform Act (2008) prevents anyone who cannot confirm legal immigration status from enrolling in a public institution of higher education.

Several studies have discussed that regardless of whether or not undocumented students were able to graduate from high school, complete an Associate's Degree, complete a Bachelor's degree, and/or further graduate education, the available job market open to undocumented young people at the time did not change (Contreras, 2009; Gonzales, 2011). This lack of influence on job potential is one of the major differences in the developmental stage of emerging adulthood within the undocumented student population as compared to members of the majority population in the United States

(Gonzales, 2011). Several studies have reported interviews in which undocumented young adults express frustration with their lack of access to climb the social ladder. If they have graduated from college and have seen their friends and peers in successful jobs, it is frustrating to continue to be caught in low-paying and unsatisfying jobs (Gonzales, 2011).

Emerging adulthood has been defined in research as the time of delayed entry into adulthood after adolescence due to increased time in higher education or longer familial financial support (Arnett, 2000). However, some scholars recognize that this phase differs according to many factors such as socio-economic status, culture, and location. Building on the three phases of emerging adulthood (early transition, 18 to 24 years; middle transition, 25 to 29 years; late transition, 30-34 years) described by Rumbaut (2005), Gonzales (2011) lays out the altered transition from de facto legal status to illegality in the undocumented young adulthood as "discovery (ages 16 to 18 years), learning to be illegal (ages 18 to 24 years), and coping (ages 25 to 29 years)" (p. 608). Gonzales (2011) is, in effect, adding one more stage before the early transition stage described by Rumbaut (2005) that exemplifies the added step undocumented young adults must go through to reach adulthood. No research exists on leisure, recreation and sport during these transitions. The next section will address the role of recreation, leisure and sport in social change.

**Recreation, Sport and Leisure in Social Movements**

Recreation and sport create a space to cross and challenge social boundaries, to dialogue and to create hope for understanding, collaboration, and systemic change (Carlin, 2008; Farquharson & Marjoribanks, 2003; Kaufman & Wolf, 2010; Lea-Howarth, 2006; Schulenkorf, 2010). Team-sports use of the three R's of peace building— resolution, reconciliation, and reconstruction—has been studied across international boundaries (Farquharson & Marjoribanks, 2003; Lea-Howarth, 2006; Schulenkorf, 2010). Lea-Howarth (2006) concluded that team-sport can be a beneficial tool in peace-building in some situations, particularly when there is a team-sport that is highly valued across conflict lines and when teams are comprised of mixed-identity participants. It is important to note that peace-building research does not claim sports as a sole pathway to conflict resolution, but as one tool in a holistic approach to peacemaking (Lea-Howarth, 2006).

Research has also revealed that the recreation industry does not always challenge these social boundaries, but instead creates or reinforces them. Research has examined the concept of a "parallel world" in which immigrants often reside. Immigrant presence is necessary in the economic sector, but they are outcasts from social acceptance (Cravey, 2003; Nelson & Heimstra, 2008; Smith & Winders, 2008). Nelson and Heimstra (2008) use the example of the expanding ski resort industry in Colorado. As the mining industry declined and ski resorts grew, nearby towns to Summit County, like Leadville experienced an extreme and rapid expansion of Latino residents as the demand for low-income labor rose. Nelson and Heimstra (2008) point out how the development of the ski

industry has helped create a large population of immigrants—both documented and undocumented—that are perceived as invisible by the long-term majority white population within the same spaces. Immigrants live and work alongside the dominant population, but their integration has been neglected (Cravey, 2003; Smith & Winders, 2008). This contrast reveals a question--can social barriers created by the economic demand of recreation be challenged with recreation as part of a holistic strategy when seeking social change? One example of recreation in social change is discussed next.

Reintegration into the world of international sports came at a pivotal time for South Africa at the end of apartheid (Farquharson & Marjoribanks, 2003; Grundlingh, 1998; Höglund & Sundberg, 2008). Hosting the World Cup in 1995 played a key role in the success of rugby bringing together the country to celebrate the national team's success. When the World Cup Organizing Committee hesitated about hosting the game in South Africa, the president of the South African Rugby Football Union, Louis Luyt, publically challenged the racial and ethnic prejudices of South African rugby fans, players and other participants in an effort to change the negative elite image of the sport. Through new leadership, pushing to integrate the professional national team, diligent public relations, and the support of the new South African prisoner turned president, Nelson Mandela, Luyt was able to foster a national moment of togetherness that led to the furthered image of sport as a cohesive tool in the reconciliation process for South Africa (Farquharson & Marjoribanks, 2003; Grundlingh, 1998; Höglund & Sundberg, 2008).

In the same way, other sports have been used to promote racial and cultural integration. Soccer, rooted in Latin culture and popular around the world, has been used

in peacemaking and reconciliation (Gomez & Hugo, 2010; Klezynski, 2013; Lea-Howarth, 2006). Swimming pools in the 1960s were used in the civil rights movement to push for further integration among races in the US (Wiltse, 2007). Professional athletes are known to use their prestige to bring attention to social issues and advocate for change (Kaufman & Wolff, 2008).

The role of leisure and recreation in the lives of first generation immigrants has also been studied. Stodolska and Alexandris (2004) is a study of first generation Korean women that reported after acculturation and ethnic background, social class highly influenced both constraints and leisure preferences. Sharaievska, Stodolska, Shinew and Kim (2010) reported that the perceived discrimination of Latino residents in public recreation settings could lead to withdrawal from the activity. Shinew and Floyd (2005) outlined the influence of racial inequality of leisure constraints. They suggested that leisure, as a form of resistance has the potential to play a role in the empowerment of oppressed populations for social change.

Very little research has been done, however, on how undocumented Latino young adults engage in recreation. Furthermore, little research has considered the spaces for dialogue that might exist within recreational structures and could thus be used to raise awareness about the situation of these young people.  Contact theory provided a possible framework to study the impact of recreation and leisure in the lives of undocumented young adults and will be discussed in the next section.

**Contact Theory, Recreation and Leisure**

Contact theory, developed by Allport in 1954, provides a framework for the improvement of relationships between diverse groups. Exposure to diverse populations earlier in life has been shown to influence the diversity of a person's social network and tolerance for diversity throughout their life (Emerson, Kimbro, &Yancy, 2002; Miller, 2002). Emerson et al. (2002) pointed out that the value of contact between social strata is important for increasing social capital particularly for marginalized groups. Four stipulations for this increased social capital were outlined by Allport in 1954. Emerson et al. (2002) extended and further explained the four stipulations summarizing them as "common goals, intergroup cooperation, equal status, and authority support" (p. 746). These stipulations suggest that contact between ingroup and outgroup members needs to happen in a structured environment where there are shared common goals for the group, equal status in all aspects of activity and group participation, and the positive support of an inclusive mentor or person in a position of authority (Devine & O'Brien, 2007).

Pettigrew, Christ, Wagner, and Stellmacher (2007) furthered contact theory by looking at the difference between direct and indirect contact. Indirect contact is characterized by "having a friend in the ingroup who has a friend in the outgroup" (Pettigrew et al 2007, p 411). Allport's original contact theory was solely based on direct contact. Pettigrew et al. (2007) found that direct and indirect contact have similar resulting impacts on prejudice and work together for greater results. Given the idea of "parallel worlds" (Cravey, 2003; Nelson & Heimstra, 2008; Smith & Winders, 2008), the added benefit of indirect contact could be advantageous for undocumented young adults.

17

Recreational therapy has used contact theory as a basis to examine the benefits of inclusive recreational activities for people with disabilities (Devine & O'Brien, 2007). Devine and O'Brien (2007) looked specifically at integrated youth camps. They pointed out that with six factors including positive, continuous contact, group goals, equal status, mutual rewards, personal and structured contact rather than informal contact, and clear support from positive authorities, contact theory can produce positive results in these integrated camp settings. They also noted that negative contact could further embarrassment of the out-group and increase discomfort and social stigmas if poorly implemented (Devine & O'Brien, 2007). Novak and Rogan (2010) looked at contact theory's implications in the work environment for people with disabilities. They found that Allport's four stipulations heavily influenced social acceptance and integration into the work environment. They also noted the need for a structure that encouraged interdependent work tasks to encourage contact and respect (Novak & Rogan, 2010).

Kim (2012) examined the role of recreation in the lives of first generation Korean women in the United States through the lens of contact theory. Even with significant language barriers, limited intergroup contact, major cultural differences, etc., some of the women interviewed reported positive intergroup relationships that had an impact on their lives through recreational activities such as music participation and volunteering at a retirement home. This study's unique look at contact theory from the outgroup perspective highlighted the benefits for the out-group to participate in intergroup recreational activities, particularly during acculturative stress for immigrants (Kim,

2012). In addition to contact theory, leisure constraint theory is reviewed to contextualize this study.

Leisure constraint theory, originally developed by Crawford and Godbey in 1987 could provide insight into findings from this study and provide a base for future research as discussed in the last chapter of this paper. Crawford and Godbey (1987) conceptualized constraints as falling into three categories defined as interpersonal, intrapersonal and structural. In 1993, Jackson, Crawford and Godbey added that negotiation of constraints to leisure is possible and in some cases mild constraints could make participation more likely. Rublee and Shaw (1991) found that constraints to community engagement and leisure participation by Latina women immigrants in Canada negatively influenced the potential benefits for social integration and well being through these activities.

There has been little research on the use of contact theory or constraint theory in recreational spaces to increase social awareness of the undocumented population. While the 1.5 generation may experience similar stressors associated with immigrating as the Korean women in Kim's (2012) study, the undocumented population may experience further constraints related to illegality, socio-economic status, and heightened levels of discrimination. The young adults of the 1.5 generation, specifically, may benefit from recreation based intergroup contact as a way to foster a positive support network that could help them through their transition to illegality. However, as some research notes, the fear that undocumented young adults experience of revealing legal status in new and

even familiar social settings could be a major constraint (Abrego, 2011; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Mendez-Shannon, 2010).

## Summary

In this chapter, a review of relevant literature was provided. The review included background literature covering the context of the undocumented young adult population, the role of leisure and recreation in crossing social barriers and the proposed theoretical basis of this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

**Overview**

This chapter will cover the methodological approach used in this study. It will describe the study sample, data collection process, the data instrument, trustworthiness, and the process used in data analysis.

**Methods**

The purpose of this study was to understand the recreational experiences of undocumented young people. Due to the lack of research on this topic, qualitative methods were chosen. Qualitative methods allowed the voices of the participants to guide the process of building the necessary depth of knowledge to complete further studies (Creswell, 2007). Data were used to develop an understanding of the undocumented young adult's recreational engagement and environment.

**Study Sample**

Seven young adults without legal citizenship, residency or visa status in the United States were sampled. This study's inclusion criteria included meeting eligibility requirements for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and being 18 or older at the time of the study as the DACA requirements served to operationalize the definition of the 1.5-generation population in the context of this study. This provided a structure to

delimit and recruit participants in a particularly hard to reach group.  The qualifications for DACA are listed in the literature review of this study.

In addition to these stipulations, the sample included only undocumented young adults who had a high school diploma. Students who were enrolled in at least one class in higher education in the fall semester of 2014 for at least part of the semester were selected. This consistency of education background and enrollment made it possible to examine any connections between recreation participation and success in enrolling in higher education.

The participants were from several different countries including three students from Mexico, two from Columbia, one from Honduras, and one from Costa Rica. The participants had been in higher education from one semester to three semesters. Five were enrolled in a two-year technical college, one was enrolled in a four-year liberal arts college, and one had recently dropped out of a two-year technical school mid-semester due to financial issues. All of the participants were between 18 and 21 years old. None were married or had children.

The first participants were recruited through the Greenville Hispanic Alliance, followed by snowball sampling due to the limited and guarded access to the undocumented community. This organization works with both documented and undocumented Latinos in a wide variety of capacities from raising cultural awareness to advocacy around policy issues that impact the Hispanic community.  The Greenville Hispanic Alliance coordinated a schedule of interviews and managed participant information to encourage confidentiality.

| Pseudonym | Region of Origin | Sex | Main Activity | Work |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| John (A) | South America | Male | Soccer | Insurance Agency |
| Mark (B) | Central America | Male | Rugby | Sales Agency |
| Phil (C) | North America | Male | Drama | Retail store |
| Allison (D) | Central America | Female | Zumba, Beta Club, Yearbook Staff, National Honors Society | Restaurant |
| Rachel (E) | South America | Female | Beta Club, Sunday school teacher, Church youth retreats | Consulting Agency |
| Robert (F) | North America | Male | Photography, Videography, Art/Drawing | Machine shop |
| Sarah (G) | North America | Female | Advocacy, Community Service | Retail store |

*Table 3.1* Description of participants and pseudonyms

**Data Collection**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted based on the three-step Seidman approach (Seidman, 2012) to understand the participants' recreational experiences. Interviews started with a background and life history, and then moved to a detailed description of their recreation participation and the social environment surrounding their recreational experiences. The final part of the interview asked participants to reflect on the meaning of these recreation experiences in their life and in their pursuit of education. A Sociogram was used to assist with discussion. The Sociogram allowed participants to show different layers of social connections in the participant's life and it to encouraged reflection on social connections in recreational settings. At the beginning of each

interview participants were asked to write a brief description of influential mentors, family and friends in their lives. They were asked to place these descriptions within the Sociogram, which is a set of concentric circles. The innermost circles represent relationship that students identified as most important and the outermost circle identified important acquaintances, peers, or friends.  Essentially, this served as a visual guide for the interview.

All the interviews were audio recorded for transcription, review and analysis with approval of the participants. Data were collected in person, with the interviews beginning in November 2014 and continuing through late December 2014. One interview with each participant was collected. To protect the identity of the participants, interviews were conducted at the University Center in Greenville, SC. The center provided a neutral, quiet, and safe area, and avoided the collection of participants' identities or addresses. A member of the staff at the Greenville Hispanic Alliance was responsible for contacting participants to avoid the research project having access to phone numbers or other contact information. Table 3.1 provided on the previous page outlines participant's basic description. All names were changed and any identifying information was eliminated in order protect the confidentiality of the participants. Pseudonyms were created to avoid stereotypes. All institutions were referred to by their type (ie 2-year technical college).

**Data Instrument**

As the interviewer in qualitative research, I was the data collection instrument. Understanding personal biases was particularly important related to this topic due to

polarized public opinion on the topic of undocumented immigration. The importance of personal bias awareness was especially important considering my experience working in the border advocacy movement in Tucson, Arizona where I facilitated experiential learning excursions along the border regions. To acknowledge my position and its relationship to the research, I kept a reflexivity journal, notes and memos throughout the data collection and analysis processes as well as intentionally sought out odd cases and opposing opinions to include in the interview process. I learned about local immigration laws and was knowledgeable of those in each participant's region, as the political regulations on immigration vary widely across the United States. I worked to manage my biases to ensure trustworthiness.

**Trustworthiness**

As the data instrument, I used a reflexivity journal during the research process in order to record my own thoughts, reactions, and position throughout the process. Journaling helped me to navigate my own assumptions and distinguish them within the data collection and analysis process. Dupuis (1999) points out that in qualitative research, rather than removing ourselves from the research when telling the story of others, embracing both the research self and human influence helps us maintain authenticity throughout the process. I worked to use the reflexive journaling as a way to recognize my own reactions to maintain that authenticity, but also acknowledge the impact of my thoughts, experiences, and position on the trustworthiness of the data and data analysis. I used both Dupuis (1999) and Genoe & Liechty (2014) to guide my reflexive journaling

process. This delineation also helped me execute this research in a way that honors this marginalized population and recognizes that I am an outsider as a white woman working on a Master's degree.

The data collected from the interviews were later considered with my notes, memos, and reflexive journal. A summary of preliminary findings was returned to participants through the Greenville Hispanic Alliance during the member checking process. All participants were encouraged to respond and three participated. The member checks allowed participants to confirm that their interviews were well interpreted and to respond to any ideas brought up by other participants. The notes, memos and intentionality of questioning participants with alternate experiences or opposing opinions helped me maintain an awareness of the influence of personal biases and opinions in the research process.

English was used in the interviews in order to avoid losing any meaning in translation. If a participant used a word in Spanish or another language, they were asked to give a definition in English during the interview.

Finally, an outside researcher was asked to provide external auditing during and after the coding process as recommended by Creswell (2009). The auditor reviewed eight of the total 65 codes by reading every comment that was labeled with that code. Any questioned decisions were discussed until consensus was reached between the auditor and researcher. Less than two in ten coding decisions were questioned, suggesting a high level of agreement. Another researcher was asked to do peer debriefing in line with Creswell (2009). The peer researcher asked questions about the study and looked through

all the codes, topics and themes asking questions to understand and clarify the decisions, aiding the trustworthiness throughout data analysis.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis began during the continued collection of interviews. This allowed me to identify any further questions that needed to be asked in remaining interviews. All of the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Open coding was used to organize the data. Codes based on the three factors related to—community support, extra familial mentors, and dedicated extra-curricular participation were developed before coding any data as these codes arose numerous occasions during the data collection process. Then, axial coding was used to group the open codes into categories and identify topics. Selective coding was used to identify themes from the topics identified through axial coding. From these themes, three major points were identified as the findings of the research.

<div align="center">

**Summary**

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Chapter three covered the details related to the study sample, the data collection process, the data instrument, trustworthiness, and the process of data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

**Overview**

This chapter covers the findings of this study. Three themes emerged from the data and are described with supporting examples and quotes from the interviews.

**Findings**

The findings of this study include three themes that emerged from the data. These themes include: (1) experiences of financial constraints to higher education such as out-of-state tuition, a lack of scholarship access and uncertainty; (2) constraint negotiation leading to dedicated participation in extracurricular activities, building a supportive community and establishing extra-familial mentors; (3) constraints to leisure participation which severely increase after high school often related to time, financial stress, and transportation.

**Theme One: Financial Constraints to Higher Education**

The results of this study suggest that undocumented young adults, even after they have obtained a DACA permit experience significant financial constraints to the pursuit of higher education.  Most students, when asked about their current education situation, explained that they had to work full time in order to pay out-of-state tuition since they live in South Carolina which has no tuition equity laws. Only two students worked part-

time. All of the students were full-time students or desired to be full-time students. Mark explained,

> I couldn't get a license at an early age, I couldn't do whatever I needed to do, I couldn't apply to colleges without paying out of my pocket for out of country tuition and like I said, I applied to [Public, State, 4-year] College so I wouldn't want to pay like 30, 40 grand out of pocket a year. So yeah.

Mark, similar to other participants, is now working full time in order to take as many classes as possible at a local technical college each semester with the goal of being a full-time student as often as possible. Allison, when asked when she began to understand the true ramifications of her immigration status, put it this way,

> I guess when I first got into college was when I completely understood everything because before college, I had gotten a job to help pay for a lot of things and I get paid…well, I don't get paid like minimum wage so it makes me really think because right now…I was only able to afford to go to three classes and I work full-time. So I was, like, wow, I get paid this much, but then you think about people who only get paid $7.25 and you're like how are they doing it?

South Carolina is one of three states that has legislation prohibiting undocumented young adults from enrolling in any form of public higher education. In South Carolina, DACA provides appropriate documentation to enroll in higher education (Nguyen, Hoy & Zelideh, 2015). However, a lack of access to in-state tuition fostered a lifestyle that increased financial stress and time constraints for participants.

Financial stress was increased further by the lack of access to numerous scholarships. Examples that came up in multiple interviews include lack of access to the South Carolina LIFE scholarships (available for students who maintain good grades in high school and attend South Carolina higher education institutions), and lack of access to state and federal grants and loans. Most students commented that they understood that this lack of access to state and federal funding was due to their immigration status, but still experienced frustration with restrictions of general scholarship funds. Sarah described the frustration related to understanding the consequences of her status related to scholarship access,

It started my senior year because that's when I started applying to college. I just saw the huge, I don't know, I don't want to call it injustice, but that's what I feel like it is because I have, I met all the requirements to get these scholarships and the part that hurt me was the fact that I didn't get the Life Grant not necessarily the Pell grant because I understand I'm not a citizen…The Life Grant, oh my gosh, that was devastating because I had worked so hard to keep my GPA up, to do community service hours…[this issue] opened my eyes like it was crazy. I'd never imagined that despite the fact that I had studied, stayed up every night till 1, bought these SAT and ACT books and just studied forever; went to sleep late and got up early and it all came down to 'no, you can't get it because you don't have this paper work.' Especially with a lot of other scholarships, it was the same way.

Sarah graduated with a 4.1 GPA and was enrolled in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program at her high school. She played soccer all four years, was the co-captain her

senior year. She was a dedicated member and leader in several high school service clubs and the Spanish club, easily fulfilling all requirements of the LIFE scholarship program apart from immigration status.

Sarah presented a special case as she was the only one of the participants who was able to obtain a large scholarship for higher education. The scholarship required that she apply for renewal on a yearly basis. She explained part of the process she went through to get the partial scholarships and the financial fear related to returning,

And that got me in touch with Dr. A here at the center and she called me (during class)…I was like, Mr. W, may I please answer this phone call, because I feel like, its either scholarships or college…[Dr. A] was like, I think you may be able to go to school and like, I was crying. It was really crazy because I thought I was going to have to go to tech school…but, since a lot of my scholarships are on yearly scholarships, I'm not sure if I'm going to be able to return to school. But, I don't know, it's just scary because you know, I like learning and I like having teachers that actually love to learn and I like assignments you know, challenging assignments and I felt like at a community college I wouldn't be getting that.

In other parts of her interview she talked about going repeatedly to the admissions offices and financial aid offices to ask for help looking for scholarships. Other participants also reached out for scholarship money. Mark explained,

Like I said, I wanted to play [rugby] for [Public, Instate, 4-year] College, there was a rugby camp and the rugby coach went there and I actually met him and everything. And then a few years later, my senior year, so I reached out to him to

31

see if I could get a scholarship and he told me to apply for it. So, I applied for it.

[I] got a little bit of money but not enough to cover it, obviously.

These young adults, even when qualified, cite facing numerous challenges in obtaining enough scholarship money to make any higher education apart from a two-year institution and degree, financially feasible. Rachel explained the extreme frustration she felt,

Yeah, so one of the things that I would like to do is go to ... or would have started at a four-year university, not that going to [2-year institution] is a bad thing or anything but it's just my preference. And the reason that I wasn't able to do that I think is because it was just too expensive, and I wasn't getting any help from the government, like any scholarships or anything. I got scholarships in high school but I wasn't able to use them, which was ... [really frustrating].

One of the participants had been enrolled and studying and because of financial issues, was forced to drop out. Phil said,

I was going this semester as well, but unfortunately I had to drop out due to some financial issues. And throughout my schooling, I did some fulltime work. And from there, I paid as well. I had good support from my parents.

Phil exemplified the financial instability that several participants experienced and feared. Most of the students work full-time and take as many classes as possible at a second choice institution each semester citing time and money as the most common constraints to pursuing higher education. Several students pointed out that their focus after high school became overwhelmed with working enough to pay for school and

working so much that school and work constraints kept them from participating in any other activities. Findings related to mechanisms to negotiate these constraints are discussed in the next section.

**Theme Two: Negotiation of Constraints to Higher Education**

In this section two mechanisms that influenced constraint negotiation are presented. They include the role of DACA status and the role of leisure and recreation.

**Sub-theme one: The role of DACA.**

All of the participants cited the DACA legislation as the primary reason they were able to enroll in higher education at all. Rachel explained,

I'm glad I that I can now transport myself to the places where I need to go and not depend on someone, even though I still don't have a car, but transportation is transportation, my parent's car….I can go to college now which is something I couldn't [do].

Not only did DACA help alleviate some structural constraints, the participants often mentioned that it had helped dissolve at least some fear of discrimination and deportation. John said,

Now, since I have DACA, I like to share it with everybody. It's like, "Oh, I have this. I am DACA." I have deferred action. Obviously, I have to let my bosses know. So, I like to share it to anybody that that's what I am. Before DACA came, I didn't like to tell people that I didn't have papers. And so I kind of avoided the

question as much as I could. Just because if you didn't have papers it kind of

sounded like you were frowned upon. So, I just avoided the question, once I knew

[about being undocumented]. Like I said, when I was little you didn't really care.

 Several students even mentioned that without DACA they might have left their families

to go back to their country of origin where they had few weak or no ties to obtain higher

education. This would have barred them from seeing their family for an extended period

of time. Robert confided,

> I would probably be in Mexico right now…Um, because you know right before
>
> the whole DACA thing came out, I was actually ready to leave and go to Mexico
>
> and study there…Because aside from like all the hobbies that I had and all the
>
> other things, what I really wanted was to study engineering. So, I was like, that
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> was my only choice that I had at the moment, just to go there and study. Then, of
>
> course the DACA thing came out right, I think it was maybe a month before I
>
> actually left.

With DACA status, young adults are able to enroll in more universities than before.

DACA status also allowed the participants to obtain work permits and in some states,

including South Carolina, the potential to obtain a driver's license. In addition to DACA,

the role of leisure and recreation in constraint negotiation is discussed in the following

section.

**Sub-theme two: The role of leisure and recreation.**

All of the students who participated in this study were actively engaged in leisure and/or recreational extracurricular activities in high school. These varied widely from photography and videography for their church, to soccer or other sports, to civic engagement and community service clubs. During high school, the social connections from these activities played an important role in their lives, either enriching previously established relationships or providing a setting to build new relationships both with peers and mentors. However, a majority of the participants experienced more constraints to leisure and recreational pursuits after graduating from high school.

As mentioned in the literature review, dedicated extracurricular activity, supportive communities, and mentors outside the family are known to support disadvantaged young adults, including immigrant young adults as they face their difficult transition out of high school and de facto status and to work toward higher education (Abrego, 2008; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales &Ruiz, 2014; Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008; Smith, 2008; Staton-Salazar, 2001; Zhou, 2008).

When describing their extracurricular activities, each participant fulfilled the dedicated extracurricular activity portion of these three factors. Each participant was active in a variety of activities, but typically more dedicated to one high school activity. John played soccer in his neighborhood as a small child, throughout elementary school, middle school and all four years of high school. Mark played soccer until the freshman year of high school when he transferred to the rugby team with others he knew from soccer. He played on the rugby team all four years of high school. Phil was actively

involved with both drama classes and drama productions all four years of high school. Allison was in Beta Club for three years of high school, which encouraged her to fulfill leadership roles in other school clubs such as the recycling club and the yearbook team. Rachel was highly involved with the children in her church and faith based youth conventions and fellowship opportunities. Robert was involved with art classes all four years of high school and runs all the photography and videography for his church. Sarah played soccer all four years in addition to being highly involved in numerous civic and community service organizations.

Each of the students mentioned participating in leisure and recreation activities with close friends. Mark said,

> [Rugby's] actually the love of my being. Like I said, I played several things in high school and it was fun. It was really, really fun, but once I started getting to know everybody, it became more of, instead of just a game, it became like a bond or whatever.

Some participants mentioned choosing activities with their closest friends more often, which as Sarah pointed out, "[the leisure activity] definitely enriched [friendships] because we shared memories, you know. Common high school stuff." Allison, when describing her participation in recycling club and yearbook, responded,

> My two best friends were in the recycling club senior year of high school. My biology teacher, which kind of got me into biology, too, he played an important role. Basically we have maybe 20 members… actually one of my best friends, LG, I met her in third grade so we go way back, and I was the one that got her

into recycling club. I was like hey, this is going to benefit you. You're going to get

your hours. So she started doing it. And then my other friend, YP, I met her my

freshman year of high school, and I also got her into that.

Other participants suggested that they both made new friends and built on older

friendships in leisure and/or recreation pursuits. John explained,

JG, he's a friend of mine. I met him in middle school. He went to the same middle

school that I did. We played soccer in middle school…He went to a rival high

school of mine, but we were still friends at the time. We played soccer against

each other and now we go to the same college at Tech…But I've known him for a

while and he's a very cool guy. He's a good friend.

John grew up playing soccer in the parking lot of his apartment complex with anyone

who would play and continued to build those relationships from childhood soccer

throughout his life, sometimes adding new friends such as JG. Robert said it clearly, "The

time that we spent together bonding in different activities. I guess that really made it

really strong; when I introduced him to one of my hobbies, and what I really like doing."

Many of the participants cited leisure and recreation in helping them establish a

supportive community during their high school years. Mark said of his rugby team,

It's a lot of people. Like I said, it was kind of different because we as a whole

were really close but some were closer than others. So for example, the whole

game is split out into between backs…and forwards, which is what I was…so all

the forwards kind of just work together, and all the backs were kind of just

together, but there was obviously more…there was some intermingling of course.

We were all just really close.

All the students who played sports mentioned this sentiment of team camaraderie; however, even those who participated in other leisure pursuits mentioned support from groups where they participated in leisure activity. For example, Phil refers to road tripping with a small group of friends he met primarily through family connections and drama activities,

With the friends I have, we support each other, and we ended up doing it together, and it was a lot easier going with them instead of going alone. When everything went bad, you still have them as backup. That made the trip.

In addition to the supportive communities these young adults formed through extra-curricular leisure and recreation activities, they often described finding mentors in the adult leaders of these activities. Mentors were described as teachers who also facilitated extra-curricular clubs or sports, coaches, pastors and even a lawyer that helped file the paperwork for a DACA permit. Sarah talked about her primary mentors,

She was actually my history teacher and we had been together because of the IB diploma program that I was in. We had her for two years and I had known her since freshman year because of [the club], and her name was Mrs. P, she's been a major help,…She was always the teacher that I could go to and cry and just go sit with her, and if we ever needed anything she was there….My English teacher Mrs. A, she's from ___, she's also a feminist, but she also loves fighting for

justice. And I taught both of them what DACA meant and ever since then they've

been trying to reach out to DACAmented students and help out.

Further explaining the impact of her mentors, Sarah said, "My teachers were there too, oh

my gosh, my teachers helped me so much. Always giving me words of encouragement

and never letting me give up."

In an alternate response, Phil felt like he didn't have any mentors in high school in

teachers, advisors or coaches, but he talked extensively about a mentor he was matched

with in a middle school mentor program.

He embedded that idea of going to college at a young age. He was there, "Hey

you should go to college. I went to the University of Georgia and I got a degree in

communications."…They want the best. They want you to go to college, but they

really have no clue. It's a surreal idea. So they give you the idea of going, but they

don't give you a guide or a walkthrough of how it's going to be or what it should

be like.

Phil, even though he had to drop out in the middle of the semester for financial reasons

still talked about going back—to be the first college graduate in his family and to set an

example for his younger brother.

Most participants articulated that they saw the link between reaching higher

education and their leisure pursuits through developing supportive community networks,

relationships with extra-familial mentors, and participating in extra-curricular activities.

However, most participants began to see a shift in their leisure participation after high

school graduation, which is discussed in the next section.

**Theme Three: Constraints to Leisure after High School Graduation**

Regardless of how participants met mentors, most explained that they had not had time to keep up with these mentors after starting college. Robert mentioned the fine arts teacher at his school as a very influential mentor, but said, "After I graduated, I kind of lost track."

This trend of losing track of high school mentors also seemed to play out with supportive communities and friendships with peers in leisure activities. When their friends left to go to college and they stayed, their group of friends narrowed. Rachel explained the role of her friends from a local church based youth conventions,

> I guess they don't play that big of a role anymore because I don't get to, most of them are in college now and they're all at different colleges, even though a lot of them went to the same colleges, which was where I wanted to go.

Participants also saw a significant increase in their constraints to participate in leisure and recreation pursuits after graduating from high school. Phil explained,

> The transition was very dramatic. You get out of high school, and you're automatically an adult; you're given so many responsibilities within a matter of seconds. So that's kind of nerve-wracking. In my situation, I had to find a job right away and find a way to bring bread home. So, that stopped me from doing the things I like, such as drama. At [two-year institution] we have a drama program that I wish I could have volunteered for it, but having to fit it into my schedule…I could have certainly worked it out. But, the money had more importance.

Some participants found recreation leagues to try to continue their participation, but still struggled to do so. Mark said,

> Yeah, like I said, with high school, I stuck with rugby for all four years of high school and we all got to know each other, and we all learned how we played.… So it was definitely different whenever I switched over to [the local recreation league, older men]. I didn't know anybody and they were all older guys. I was maybe 19, 18 or so. So, it was kind of hard transitioning. Didn't know many people and it was hard for me to get with them. It was hard to communicate with them…. Well, I stopped playing ever since earlier this year or so just because of school and work. But, it definitely would've changed. You got used to the guys eventually. You get used to everybody.

Most of the participants mentioned this type of drop off in participation in leisure activities after high school graduation as well as losing contact with friend groups from those activities, and losing contact with mentors from high school.

Only a few participants expressed that they had figured out how to negotiate these constraints to recreation and leisure after high school. Several students were part of an honor society at their technical school and acknowledged their low level of participation and desire to do more. Even the very dedicated and energetic Sarah said,

> I got accepted [to the campus activities board], but I couldn't make it because the time and the transportation as well. And student ambassadors, which I applied for as well and got accepted, but couldn't do it because of work.

Even though these young adults face numerous challenges, their participation in leisure and recreation helped foster supportive communities, relationships with extra-familial mentors, and participation in extra-curricular activity that the students all cited as factors in their success in reaching higher education. However, they experienced a severe drop off of leisure participation after high school graduation which had a negative impact on the three factors that help undocumented young adults cope and reach for higher education. The drop off seems to be most related to time constraints due to working full time and studying, but also financial issues and occasionally, difficultly finding welcoming structures and supportive systems that fit their busy schedules to engage in leisure and recreation pursuits.

## Summary

This chapter reported the findings of the study, reflecting the three themes through examples from the data. Young adults with DACA status experience constraints to higher education including, but not limited to out-of-state tuition, a lack of scholarship access and uncertainty related to continuing education. When constraints to leisure are negotiated, leisure participation leads to dedicated participation in extracurricular activities, building a supportive community and establishing extra-familial mentors. These young adults experience constraints to leisure participation, which severely increase after high school often related to time, financial stress, and transportation.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

**Overview**

This section will summarize the study, place the findings in the context of the literature, propose a framework for future research, explain practical implications, examine the limitations of this study and give recommendations for future research. The three themes that emerged from the data both support and extend the existing literature. After reflecting on the findings of this study in the context of current literature, a possible framework for future research is briefly presented. This study also led to methodological insight as it posed numerous challenges including finding participants, arranging interviews, and collecting member checks.

**Summary of Study**

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the leisure experiences of undocumented Latino young adults in order to note any potential links between leisure experience and success in reaching higher education. These young adults face significant challenges in their transition out of high school and their pursuit of higher education (Abrego, 2006; Abrego, 2011; Contreras, 2009; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Mendez-Shannon, 2010; Rumbaut, 2004). Three factors have been identified in research literature that these disadvantaged, undocumented young adults who reach higher education have in common—supportive social networks, extra-familial mentors, and dedicated participation in extra-curricular activity (Abrego, 2008; Gonzales,

2011; Gonzales &Ruiz, 2014; Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008; Smith, 2008; Staton-Salazar, 2001; Zhou, 2008).

This study began based in contact theory, but the data links did not show changes in tolerance and discrimination as a result of contact between social strata in leisure participation. As discussed in the literature review contact theory states that interaction with diverse populations improves the diversity of social networks and tolerance of different social groups (Allport, 1954; Emerson, et al., 2002). This theory originally developed in 1954 does not account for current issues, restrictions and limitations due to immigration status. While a few participants mentioned diversity and lessened levels of discrimination in soccer and rugby, this was not a pervasive theme throughout the data. Discrimination, stereotypes, and stereotype threat definitely arose in the data, but the premise of contact theory—building acceptance and tolerance—was only seen in a few examples of soccer (John and Sarah) and rugby (Mark). However, the findings of this study are in line with and extend other previous literature as discussed in the next section.

**The Findings in the Context of Existing Literature**

The findings of this study show the influence of leisure and recreation pursuits in developing and enriching supportive community networks, relationships with extra-familial mentors and dedicated participation in extracurricular activity which supports previous research literature (Abrego, 2008; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Ruiz, 2014; Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008; Smith, 2008; Staton-Salazar, 2001; Zhou, 2008). The positive influence of mentorship from teachers, counselors, coaches and pastors on higher

education closely reflects the findings from Portes and Fernandez-Kelly's study in 2008, Smith (2008) and Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco & Dedios-Sanguineti (2013), that all found the role of these mentors is essential. Without these mentors, with whom they can talk about their situation freely, to motivate and encourage when the student faces disappointment and constraints, the pursuit of educational and occupational success would be constrained. Similarly, this study showed relationships with friends and peers in supportive community networks were formed during high school years and provided motivation and encouragement that was key to sustained engagement and the successful pursuit of higher education (Abrego, 2008; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Ruiz, 2014; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). This study revealed that many of these relationships both with mentors and peers are developed while participating in extracurricular leisure and recreation activities.

The findings of the present study also document a severe drop off of participation in leisure and recreation after high school graduation due to time and financial constraints. The increase in these constraints after high school graduation seem to be related to paying out-of-state tuition and the lack of access to scholarships due to their immigration status. These factors alone might not prove constraining enough to prevent participation alone, but together each component may provide enough friction to create a constraint. This drop in participation is in line with the increased time and effort required to pay for higher education described in Gonzales (2011). He describes the transition to illegality for students who both found financial support and those who could not attend college for lack of funding.  This study shows the increasing time constraint directly

influences students' ability to participate in recreation since their first priorities are school and paying for school.

As a result of lowered leisure and recreation participation, students described weakened ties with mentors and community networks that had been developed in high school. While this could be due simply to transitions associated with typical emerging adulthood, more research is needed to understand the implications of lowered participation in leisure and recreation after high school and its impact on continued success in higher education. This finding is in line with Arnett's (2003) research on emerging adults in American ethnic groups which reported experiences of obligations toward others and bicultural standards during the emerging adulthood years. This could also be influenced by the overall decline in sports participation across the country documented by Howard (1992). Berk and Goebel (1987) found that from high school to college, there is an overall decline in recreation participation of young adults no matter previous levels of recreation participation.

All of the students in this study were in their first, second or third semester of study at a technical two-year institution with the exception of Sarah who was in her first year of study at a four-year institution. Therefore, this study does not reveal the long-term impact of the drop off of leisure and recreation participation after high school. This study provides a foundation to explore future research.

**Implications for Future Research and a Possible Framework**

The findings of this study reveal that young adults with DACA status experience leisure constraints similar to other marginalized populations, but are further impacted by their immigration status. Future research is needed to understand the complexities of this populations leisure constraints and their negotiation ability.

Crawford and Godbey (1987) originally expressed constraints in three categories—interpersonal, intrapersonal and structural constraints. Jackson, Crawford & Godbey (1993) theorized about the ability of individuals to negotiate their constraints to leisure. Stodolska and Yi-kook (2005) pointed out the connections between the marginality, ethnicity and discrimination framework with leisure constraint theory especially in the lives of minority groups who do not have the same access to resources such as education and income (marginality), who live with different cultural traditions such as family-oriented values (ethnicity/culture), and who experience oppressive social tendencies such as stereotyping and stereotype threat (discrimination) (Stodolska & Yi-kook, 2005). In the context of the population of young adults with DACA status, further research is needed to understand how interpersonal, intrapersonal and structural constraints interact with the marginality, ethnicity and discrimination framework in the context of leisure.
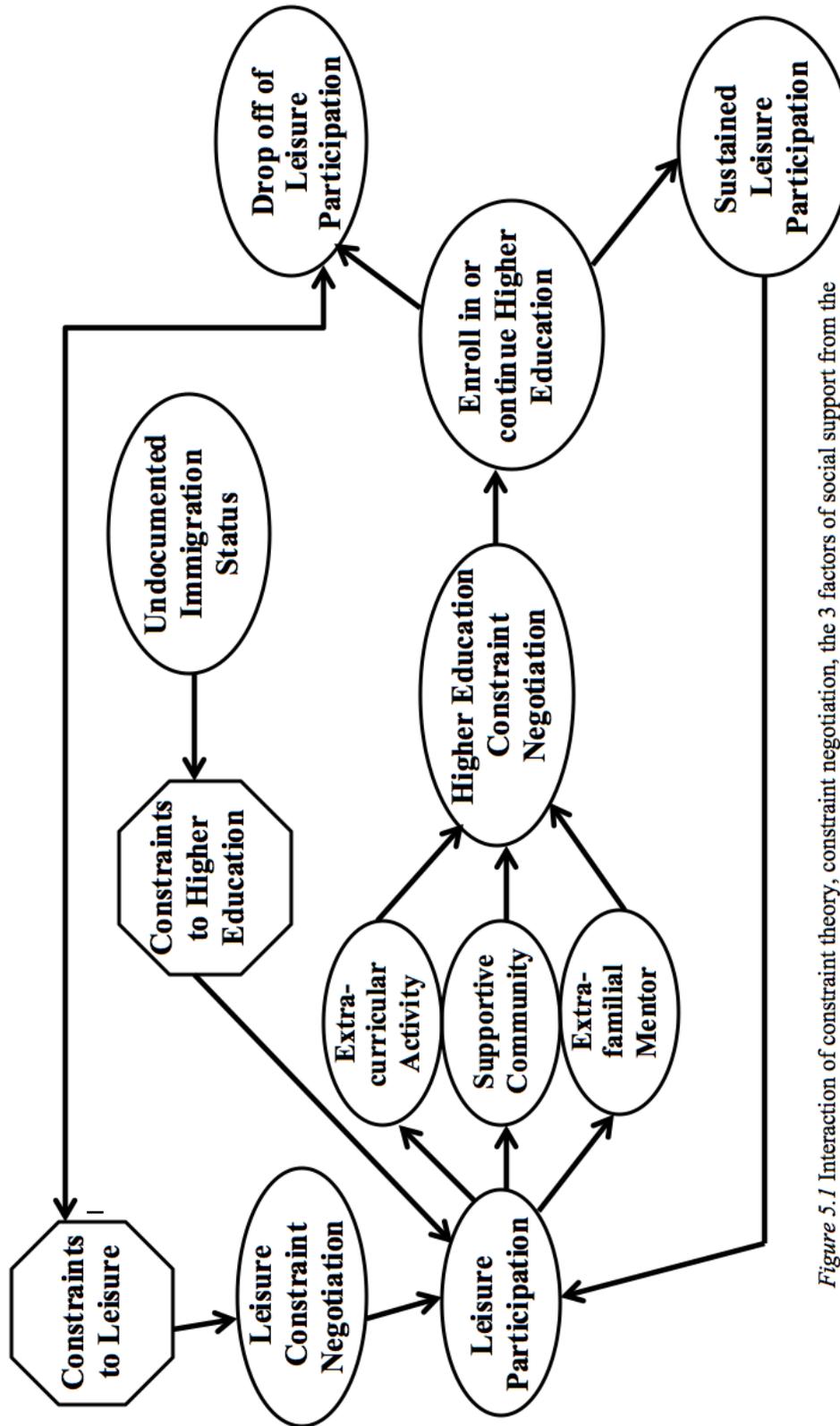
*Figure 5.1* Interaction of constraint theory, constraint negotiation, the 3 factors of social support from the literature review, and higher education related to immigration status of undocumented young adults

Future research could overlay constraint theory and the three support system factors discussed in the literature review—community support, extra-curricular activity, and extra-familial mentors (Abrego, 2008; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Ruiz, 2014; Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008; Smith, 2008; Staton-Salazar, 2001; Zhou, 2008). Combining these concepts, future research could examine the impact of leisure constraint negotiation on continued development of the three social support factors throughout higher education.

The synthesis of the findings of this study with leisure constraint theory, a constraint negotiation model and the three social support factors reflects a framework for future research. Future research could incorporate the marginality, ethnicity and discrimination framework with the proposed framework provided in figure 5.1 on the previous page.

As this framework is used in future research, it is important to acknowledge that leisure participation is likely one of many avenues for undocumented young adults to develop supportive community networks, engage in extra-curricular activity and build relationship with extra-familial mentors. Further research would be needed to understand the role of leisure in the overall support structure of young adults with DACA status. More research is needed to understand the strength of the connections and to determine the directions of influence within the framework in figure 5.1.

The findings of this study suggest the preliminary order and direction of the arrows connecting the framework. This study documents that leisure and recreation participation in high school encouraged the engagement in extra-curricular activity,

development of supportive community networks and relationships with extra-familial mentors and that leisure participation is more constrained after high school graduation for various reasons including time and financial stress.

This framework suggests that after high school graduation, sustained participation in leisure and recreational pursuits might support continued success in higher education, if leisure and recreation participation continues after initial enrollment in higher education. The framework suggests this support could be cyclical, continually cultivating extra-curricular activity, extra-familial mentors, and supportive communities. In contrast, leisure participation drop off after high school graduation could be explained as a result of enrollment in higher education and the added time and financial constraints that result. This downward spiral could contribute to increasing constraints and frictions against leisure and the weakening of the support system influencing mechanisms for coping with undocumented status.

Future research is needed to understand how both continued participation and a drop off of leisure and recreation participation impact continued success in higher education and eventual graduation. Research comparing leisure constraint negotiation of the undocumented young adult population who dropped out of high school early, graduated high school, but did not go to college, attended some college, but did not graduate, and those who obtained a degree of higher education might reveal the impact of leisure constraints negotiation throughout higher education. Further research is needed to understand these factors and recognize other characteristics that influence the proposed framework and this population overall.

Apart from this framework, the findings of this study reveal three other areas for future research including the impact of differing state laws, stereotyping of the Hispanic community, and identifying as a first generation college student within their family. Further research is necessary to understand the impact of DACA on constraint negotiation in different states and how varying state laws impact these young adults. Several participants also mentioned the influence of the negative stereotypes of both the Hispanic community and undocumented immigrants. Further research to understand the impacts of these stereotypes and how underlying stereotype threat effects enrollment and success in higher education. Many of these young adults are the first in their family to strive for higher education. Future research could extend existing literature on the impact of undocumented status on first generation college students. Research could assess the role of leisure and recreation in negotiating these multiple identities.

Future research could use intersectionality as a theoretical foundation for their study. Intersectionality has primarily developed within the women's studies field. It is based on the premise that many people who are marginalized fall into more than one stratified category making it difficult to fully understand which identifiers cause their experience of oppression (Cole, 2009; McCall, 2014; Nash, 2008; Verloo, 2006; Watson & Scraton, 2013). In the case of undocumented young adults, these young adults are both immigrants and Latino as well as, possibly low-income. Young women who are undocumented young adults face yet another disadvantaged identifier or first-generation college students might face even further discrimination. Verloo (2006) refers to this as the challenges faces with "multiple inequalities." Watson and Scraton (2013) suggest that

intersectionality could contribute to leisure scholarship and that leisure could provide further discourse into intersectional thinking in both public venues and research. A few challenges of the present study are discussed in the next section followed by recommendations for overcoming some limitations in future research.

**Limitations of This Study**

The limitations of this study included sample size, methodological limitations and the researcher's demographic characteristics. A noted limitation of this study was the difficulty in recruiting participants. Originally, the proposal sought to recruit 8-12 participants, but only 7 participants were found. It would have been helpful to have one to two more participants to increase representativeness. As the study was exploratory in nature, more studies will need to be conducted with a larger sample size.

In addition, based on Creswell (2009) caution is warranted due to a few weaknesses of interview methods. Data collected were self-reported and therefore, subject to the inaccuracies of memory and social desirability. Creswell (2009) also points out everyone does not perceive, process or report information in similar ways. This was particularly clear when some students grasped the premise of a Sociogram more quickly than others.

Some participants were clearly comfortable talking to me—a white, privileged, female Master's student, about issues related to their status. They shared stories freely with vivid detail and confidence. Others were clearly hesitant to talk very deeply about the issues they faced in both leisure and the pursuit of higher education. It was clear that

my history working in immigration advocacy (which was disclosed to participants), in addition to their DACA status provided some level of rapport and reduced fear. However, I am aware that my personal biases from working in immigration advocacy may have influenced the data in spite of my careful attention to calibrating myself throughout the study. Even with these challenges, the data that were collected both confirmed past research literature and provided information for further research. Research recommendations and practical implications to avoid or overcome some of these limitations are discussed in the next section.

**Research Recommendations**

This section suggests methodological techniques for approaching future research with this population. Using the Sociogram as a prop in the interview generally worked well. A few participants opted to list their relationships on a blank page in their own format. Taking time at the beginning of the interview to encourage the participants to think about their most influential relationships and how they had developed proved helpful in asking follow-up questions later in the interview. This also provided the participants with something tangible and task related, helping them feel more at ease and in control early in the interview.

A Greenville Hispanic Alliance employee arranged interviews. The researcher had no access to participant contact information which protected the identity of the students, but created challenges to checking in with participants when they were late or did not show up for an interview after business hours or on weekends, when most of the

interviews were held. In future research the scheduling facilitator, the interviewer and the participant could establish and use a consistent pseudonym for each participant for the extent of the study. If logistics can be worked out to protect the participants, focus groups or interviews in smaller groups with a Hispanic woman researcher might yield more in depth, detailed results.

These young adults are highly motivated toward higher education. They clearly worked diligently in their pursuit of education facing arguably more constraints than the majority of emerging adults. Given the high motivation of these young adults, future research has the potential to be well grounded and beneficial to the students if oriented in a participant action paradigm using a mixed methods approach as opposed to an interpretivist solely qualitative study such as this one. Further practical implications for leisure, recreation and education practitioners are discussed in the next section.

**Practical Implications**

Prompted after reflecting on the data, three areas of practical applications for this research knowledge are proposed. They include the development of facilities at 2-year technical and community colleges for recreation leagues (such as health and wellness opportunities that engage faculty, staff and students in diverse groups and leisure education programming), the dispersion of information on local opportunities for leisure, and continued advocacy for tuition equity and scholarship access.

Providing facilities for recreation and leisure pursuits that are affordable and available through the educational institution would provide a space for young adults to

engage with their peers and their instructors outside of the classroom. This step could put contact theory into play to facilitate relationship building for supportive communities and strong mentoring bonds. It could assist students in their transitions from high school networks and high school extracurricular activity to ones involved in higher education settings. Lynn (2012) suggested that employees of leisure and recreation facilities reflect the local community in their demographics to encourage comfort and higher use particularly among disadvantaged populations. She adds that the employees should be familiar with the cultural, racial and ethnic dynamics within the community and they should know and have experience with various leisure and recreation opportunities in the community.

Information should be provided to all students, particularly those facing extra constraints in their transition to higher education on local opportunities for leisure and recreation participation. These could include things like book clubs, community service groups, and advocacy groups. Information on how to get involved should be given to all incoming students. Providing leisure education courses to equip disadvantaged students with the necessary tools to navigate establishing leisure activities could be beneficial. Motivating faculty to encourage leisure and recreation participation could engage more students in healthy lifestyles while providing opportunities to establish social support networks in higher education.

Further, simply creating opportunities for leisure and recreation does not fulfill the need for policy change. Developing ally networks to continue to advocate for in-state tuition and greater access to scholarship funds is extremely important. This type of policy

change would reduce time and financial constraints to higher education, leisure and recreation allowing young adults with DACA status to experience smoother transitions from high school to higher education with a sustained support network and opportunities to engage in extracurricular activity. Recreation professionals can facilitate the development of important supportive community environments and ally networks for these young adults through providing inclusive leisure recreation opportunities that accounts for time and financial constraints as well as the desire to challenge themselves to grow during emerging adulthood.

**Summary**

The findings of this study exemplify the benefit of a federal policy change that allows valuable young members of our communities to continue their education in what they perceive as their home country. As these young adults find ways to broaden their knowledge and understanding, they are stressed under the weight of financial pressure that negatively impacts all parts of their lives and inhibits achieving success in higher education, finding fulfilling work, actively engaging their communities, and participating in leisure and recreation. Leisure and recreation researchers can facilitate the strengthening of supportive community networks, meaningful bonds with extra-familial mentors, and dedicated participation in extracurricular activity. This study illustrates what leisure and recreation researchers already know—that our field influences all facets of life. Leisure and recreation practitioners can use information described in this study to encourage the development of leisure and recreation facilities, distribute information, and

continue to advocate alongside these young adults for in-state tuition and access to scholarship funding. When leisure and recreation are constrained the impact is felt both by each individual and the greater community. Leisure and recreation professionals have the capacity to support these marginalized young adults in their communities to strive for better lives. The social sciences have the capacity to collectively address policy issues through creative and engaging research and community development.

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APPENDICES

**Appendix A**

**Interview Guide**

1. Introduce myself and the purpose of the study, Establish the use of a pseudonym

2. Go through their rights as a research participant and get a verbal consent

3. Background:

   a. Tell me a little about yourself

      i. Where are you from?

      ii. Are you in school? If so, where?

      iii. Do you work?

      iv. What do you like to do? Interests, Hobbies, etc.

   b. Set-up drawing a socio-gram and take some time to let them think and draw it out. We will use this throughout the interview—we can edit and add as we go on. I will have extra paper available too. Please include person's initials, age, how you know them, how long you have known them and their documentation status. Include anyone you would consider a mentor.

4. Experience:

   a. What kinds of recreation and leisure activities do you participate in? Why?

   b. What drew you to these activities?

   c. Would you describe a typical session, game, etc?

      i. What does it look like?

      ii. Is it formal? Or informal? How so?

iii. Who is in charge and who else is there?

    1. Anyone from the sociogram?

iv. Do you have all the equipment you need? How does that impact the activity? How did you get the equipment you needed?

v. Are there ever spectators? Who are they and how does that effect the activity?

vi. How do you get there? Is it far?

vii. What is it that makes you comfortable or uncomfortable? Why?

viii. Do you feel safe in your recreation space? Socially and physically?

ix. Who do you see outside of that activity? When? What is that relationship like outside of the activity?

x. What do you know about anyone's documented status there?

xi. What do others know about your immigration status? How do they know?

xii. What prevents you from participating in recreation activities you would otherwise participate in?

xiii. How has any of this changed since you graduated from high school?

xiv. How do you think these activities helped you in your transition from high school?

xv. What about your mentors from high school to now? Are they the same or different and do you know them from leisure?

5. Reflections

    a. If you think broadly about your recreation activities and your preferences in activities, what activities are you most likely to engage in?

    b. In what ways would you say this is similar to or different from what many other undocumented young adults would say?

    c. Thinking about the people you described as part of your recreational activities, what role do you see these people playing in your life? In what ways are you able to talk with them about the challenges of being undocumented? Or other life challenges? Do they know you are undocumented? How have they helped you overcome any challenges or barriers?

    d. In what ways do you think your recreation activity provides a positive, safe and inclusive environment? Examples?

    e. What do you see as the primary challenges to participating in recreation? How is this or is it not due to your immigration status? What would make it easier or better?

    f. What factors do you think were the most important in helping you reach and be successful in higher education?

    g. Do you think any part of recreation participation might have played a role? In what ways did any of your recreation connections help you negotiate the challenges in enrolling and succeeding in higher education?

    h. Closing thoughts? Comments?

## Appendix B

**Verbal Consent**

I am conducting research about recreation and social connections through recreation for undocumented young adults who are working toward higher education. I am interested in your experiences with recreation as an undocumented young person. The purpose of the research is to create an understanding of what undocumented young adults are doing in recreation and how it impacts their lives. Your participation will involve one informal interview that will last about ninety minutes. This research has no known risks. This research will benefit the academic community because it will help us to understand the context of participation in recreation for undocumented young adults. My hope is that the information found in this study can be used as a tool to help organize undocumented young adults and as a tool in advocacy for the education of undocumented young adults.

My name is Austin Langley, and I am a Clemson Master's student interested in your experience as an undocumented student. The information provided will remain strictly confidential and you will not be identified by your answers. We will be using pseudonyms for you and anyone we talk about in the interview. No identifying information will be attached to your name or pseudonym. You may choose not to answer any question. Please know that I will do everything I can to protect your privacy. Notes that are taken during the interview will be stored in a secure location.

Please keep in mind that your participation is voluntary. I can supply you with contact information regarding this study upon request. You can stop the interview at anytime and discontinue your participation without penalty and it will not impact your relationship with the Greenville Hispanic Alliance and you will still receive a thank you ten-dollar gift card for your participation.

If you would like more information or have questions regarding participant's rights, you can contact the IRB office at Clemson University. I have their contact information available for you here. (866-297-3071 and irb@clemson.edu) Would it be all right if I audiotaped our interview? Saying no to audio recording will have no effect on the interview.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

(We will have small cards with the researcher and the principal investigator's contact information. The cards will not contain any information associated with the study.)

**Appendix C**

**Example Sociogram**

This is an example and includes no participant's social information.

NF
Don't know
Weight coach
after college
2 years
citizen

TB
26
friend from college music classes
and tennis
7 years

JL
22
cousin
whole life
citizen

NE
32
friend from
4-H service
group and
cultural
exchange
7 years
tourist visa

RP
27
Friend
from
college,
church
fellowship
and service
group
6 years
citizen

GP
Don't know
Mentor,
professor
2 years
citizen

JW
Don't know
Mentor,
mom's best
friend,
music at
church
14 years
citizen

HS
28
college
friend,
same
group as
RP
6 years
citizen

Mom
59
whole life
citizen

Dad
60
whole life
citizen

BJ
28
boyfriend
2 years
citizen

MD
Don't
know
Weight
lifting
coach in
college
7 years
citizen

JB
26
childhood
friend
25 years
DACA

AH
25
Rock
climbing
partner
8 years
citizen

JH
26
college church
group co-leader
6 years
citizen

69