Critical Issues Paper

Ethnic Identity

Name

Affiliation

Date

Critical Issues Paper

Ethnic Identity

Question: 1

Unauthorized population in the United States of America has reached the number of almost 5.5 million, which is a point of great concern. Most of them are the parents, however, a significant number is of the children and the adolescents, who are unable to get authorizations due to the unauthorized status of their parents. Stepping to adolescence from childhood, the youth has to face a number of challenges as they realize their importance and position in society. Belonging to a different ethnic group than the majority groups of the society also gives rise to the identity issues to the youth and they feel themselves excluded from the majority culture of the society. This is mainly because of their unauthorized status in society. The unauthorized status of their parents, as well as their own, is like a constant hanging sword on their heads, which can kill them at any time, as they are fearful of being deported, sent to detention and separated from their parents. They develop a feeling of constant fear and anxiety, which does not only tires them physically, but also has greater implications on their mental health and psychological state (Yoshikawa, Suárez‐Orozco, & Gonzales, 2017).

The unauthorized youth face continuous fear and anxiety as they that they would be separated from their parents. Their constant fear and anxiety have great implications for their development. One of the most important domains of development which is affected by this state of constant fear and anxiety is the mental wellbeing of the youth. They are not able to enjoy the pleasures of life and are in the state of worry and fear all the time which does not even let them think properly. This can weaken their physical health by affecting the working of their heart, as well as other organs of their body. They may not be able to concentrate their studies and ultimately not being able to depict a remarkable result in their academics. Most of the times, the remarkable and impressive performance of the students is their chance towards a better life, however, in the case of unauthorized youth, they cannot even avail this opportunity because of their unauthorized status. The unauthorized status adds to their difficulties in the way that they are not able to enjoy the rights and leisure of life, which are available to other authorized segments of society. All of this is contributed by the continuous fear and anxiety. Another domain of developmental implication of living with fear and anxiety is that the youth develops the risk attitude and have the tendency of getting involved in the risky or even criminal activities. They think that they would not be able to make a change by following the laws of the society and ultimately they have to face deportation or detention, so it is better to make their life a little better even if they have to commit a crime for it (Hernandez et al., 2011).

Question: 2

The film “Papers: Stories of undocumented youth,” sheds light on the experience of the unauthorized youth who grew up in the United States of America. The film has highlighted that most of the unauthorized youth, who have spent their childhood in the United States, feel themselves as Americans and not as the member of their ethnic group. On the other hand, some other members of unauthorized youth feel alienated in the American society because of the fact that they are staying illegally in the United States of America and have not been given the authority of being the legal citizens of the American society. This has greater implications on their ethnic identity and experiences as they are made to think that they cannot relate to the American culture due to their illegal status (Manuel, Pineda, Galisky, & Shine, 2012).

The young adults’ positive ethnic and/or cultural identity development can be affected by the dissonance between their sense of identity, and the invalidation of that identity by the immigration laws of the United States of America. According to Phinney’s model of ethnic identity in adolescence, the youth belonging to the minority group of the society responds in four different ways to the awareness of their identity. The very first way is the assimilation, in which the members of the ethnic group forget about the values, traditions, and culture of their ethnic group and follow the majority culture of the society. The second way is marginality, in which the member of the ethnic group reject the values of their culture and they are also rejected by the majority culture of the society. The third way is the separation in which the members of the ethnic group reject the values of the majority culture and follow their own minority culture. The fourth and last way is biculturalism in which the members of the ethnic group develop a dual identity and follow both the minority and majority culture of the society (Phinney, 1993).

 The most prominent aspect of my identity is biculturalism. Moving through adolescence and young adulthood, some aspects of my identity remained fairly stable and the connection with my minority culture is one of the examples. On the other hand, the aspect of my identity which changed while moving from adolescence to young adulthood is becoming closer to the majority culture of the society. I have accepted the fact that there are strengths of each culture, and taking them along will only add to my strengths and increase the opportunities for progress.

References

Hernandez, I., Mendoza, F., Lio, M., Latthi, J., & Eusebio, C. (2011). Things I'll never say: Stories of growing up undocumented in the United States. *Harvard Educational Review*, *81*(3), 500-508.

Manuel, J., Pineda, C., Galisky, A., & Shine, R. (2012). Papers: Stories by undocumented youth. *Portland, OR: Graham Street Productions*.

Phinney, J. S. (1993). A three-stage model of ethnic identity development in adolescence. *Ethnic identity: Formation and transmission among Hispanics and other minorities*, *61*, 79.

Yoshikawa, H., Suárez‐Orozco, C., & Gonzales, R. G. (2017). Unauthorized status and youth development in the United States: Consensus statement of the society for research on adolescence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *27*(1), 4-19.