

Kenyon 1

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Midterm Essay

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The Future of Family: Ezra and Violet Clancy-Jackson

By the year 2035, the idea of the “typical American family” will have undergone a significant change. Ezra and Violet Clancy-Jackson are an example of evolving gender norms, and the economic demands of dual-income households, equal sharing of both professional and domestic labor, redefining what it means to be a family in America. Their relationship highlights how modern families are rethinking what it means to be an egalitarian family. Over the years, American family structures have noticeably shifted due to lower marriage rates, women working full-time, and more diverse family types. Arlie Hochschild’s *The Second Shift* described gender disparities in domestic work, but by 2035, these roles have become more flexible and equally shared. In the Clancy-Jackson household: Ezra, Violet, their daughter Jada, and adopted son Teddy, responsibilities are shared equally by both parents, reflecting these societal changes.

Violet is a very self-assured woman. She worked for the first twenty-six years of her life, earning her doctorate in Pharmacy. Now thirty-eight years old, she happily works as a Pharmacist for a large Lab Corporation in Boston. She has a loving husband who supports her every endeavor and two beautiful children. Violet works full-time and commutes an hour each way. Most mornings she’s out the door before sunrise, and she doesn’t get back until around six, just in time for dinner. But despite how committed she is to her work, she always makes time for her family. After they have dinner together, Violet cleans up the kitchen with Jada's help. Since Ezra spends most of his day caring for their son, Violet takes charge of the bedtime routine with

Teddy to give her husband some time to relax after dinner. She helps him bathe, tucks him in bed, and reads him a story until he falls asleep. After the toddler is sleeping, Ezra, Violet, and Jada spend quality time together, watching movies and relaxing.

Ezra has always wanted to be a father. He and Violet met at SUNY Brockport during their third year of college. After graduation, they moved to Boston so Violet could be closer to her Pharmacy school program. After moving, Ezra used his degree in software engineering to get a job at a tech startup company in the city. While Violet was in school, Ezra's generous salary supported them both. Three years after graduation, they were married. And two years after that, they had their first child, Jada. A few months after Jada was born, Ezra and Violet agreed that he would work remotely and that Violet would return to work. He knew she had a great passion for her job and wanted to help as much as he could. After all, he loved being a father and had always been the more nurturing of the two. Especially when Jada was younger, Ezra spent the majority of his day with his daughter. Before she started school, he would teach her how to read basic words and write the alphabet. When they rode in the car, they would sing along to his mix of upbeat pop and rock songs. And since his family lived nearby, he would often take her on playdates with her cousins and over to his parents' house to spend time with Gigi and Papa. As Jada got older, Ezra spent more hours working from home while she was in school. When their daughter was nine, Ezra and Violet decided they wanted another kid, but this time they would adopt a one-year-old boy named Theodore, whom they now call Teddy. The family assumed the same roles with Teddy as they did with Jada. Ezra took on most of the daytime childcare while his wife was at work, and Violet was responsible for nighttime duties after she got home.

Both members of the couple took turns with cooking and cleaning. But their rule was that whoever cooked didn't have to clean up the kitchen, so if Ezra cooked, Violet would clean up,

and vice versa. The family has a routine of a “Sunday deep-clean,” where the entire household, including the kids, splits the chores amongst themselves to make sure their home is tidy before the end of the week. This division of household labor works well for the family. Since both parents are bringing in income, it is only fair for them to split their domestic responsibilities as equally as possible. The couple is quite patient with one another and understands there will be times when one has to pick up the slack when the other is feeling off or too busy.

Ezra’s experience as a stay-at-home father in 2035 is a perfect example of Andrea Doucet’s description of stay-at-home fathers in her article titled “*It’s Almost Like I Have a Job, but I Don’t Get Paid*”: *Fathers at Home Reconfiguring Work, Care and Masculinity*. Like the men in Doucet’s study, Ezra performs both paid and unpaid labor. He works part-time from home while handling most of the childcare and some of the housework. His role challenges the traditional view that masculinity is defined by breadwinning. This demonstrates how definitions of work and fatherhood continue to change over time (Doucet 2004). Ezra’s role as an involved stay-at-home dad represents a considerable shift AWAY from traditional masculinity. Instead of seeing his role as “less than” or “subservient” because he is no longer the primary source of financial income, Ezra is proud to be an involved father. He values being present with his children, supporting his wife, and creating a happy home. This 2035 family model illustrates a move toward more flexible gender roles, where domestic work and emotional labor are shared more equally between partners. However, as Doucet noted, Ezra may still face social pressures regarding his status as a “working man.” Doucet’s findings help explain how even in 2035, families like the Clancy-Jacksons are still navigating the balance between gender expectations and new forms of equality at home.

Even when families shaped like these become more common in the future, they will continue to face problems from those with more traditionally conservative viewpoints and preferences. Those with those views may view Violet as an “uninvolved mother” or “too busy” for her family, and Ezra as “unemployed” or a “mooch off his wife.” These criticisms highlight how some members of society still expect families to look a certain way, regardless of how they actually may live. In the year 2035, the Clancy-Jackson family may look ordinary, nonetheless, it constitutes a step in the right direction toward reinventing what a typical family looks like and achieving more common egalitarian households. In addition to struggles with social pressures, this family also faces financial challenges that shape their decision to be a dual-income household. The economy is a major driver of family structures. As housing, childcare, and healthcare costs continue to rise, most families (including this one) require two or more incomes to get by. This makes it more common for both parents to work full-time. A positive solution is for more companies to offer remote work as a full- or part-time option. This option has made it easier for parents like Ezra to stay home while still earning income, and more employers now offer flexible hours or parental leave for both mothers and fathers. In their article *Hours of Paid Work in Dual-Earner Couples: The United States in Cross-National Perspective*, Jerry Jacobs and Janet Gornick (2002) compare how much time men and women spend in paid work across different countries. Violet and Ezra Clancy-Jackson’s lifestyle reflects many of the challenges Jacobs and Gornick describe. Violet works full-time with a long commute to work, while Ezra’s flexible schedule allows him time to care for their family. Their situation shows how work structures in the United States can make it difficult for families to balance paid and unpaid labor. Like the couples in Jacobs and Gornick’s (2002) study, the Clancy-Jackson family must constantly split time, energy, and expectations between work and home. Their experience also

highlights how policy changes (such as better parental leave or flexible work hours) make it easier for dual-earner and caregiving families to thrive or even just exist. In this way, Ezra and Violet portray both the progress and ongoing pressures faced by working families in the United States.

The Clancy-Jackson family displays how the American family structure has changed significantly over time, yet it also shows how some societal struggles remain the same. Violet and Ezra's partnership is built on shared respect and flexibility, they divide work and care in ways that make sense for their lives, not just their genders. Their family indicates the growing trend of women leading as breadwinners, men taking on more caregiving roles, and families as a whole finding new ways to balance work, love, and responsibility. From a sociologist's perspective, studying families like the Clancy-Jacksons helps us understand not only how families function, but also what they say about society as a whole. They remind us that family is a structure that is known to change over time and shaped by culture, social expectations, and economics. By 2035, we can only hope that we, as a society, continue to move in a positive direction toward gender equality and a more normalized, egalitarian standard, highlighting that there is no singular right way to be a "normal" American family anymore, but instead, many different ways to support those you love.

References:

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2. Hochschild, Arlie Russell, and Anne Machung. 2012. *The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home*. New York: Penguin Books.
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