

WGS 101 Spring 2023 SAMPLE WORKING OUTLINE -- Essay 2, Ques. 2

Ques. 2: Analysis of “Victor Smith”

Working Thesis Statement: Victor Smith, currently 22 years old and a senior at MIT, envisions himself in the future as a pediatrician, husband and father living with his wife and (hopefully) three children in a major city on the East Coast. Influenced by parents playing traditional gender roles and a more egalitarian culture in high school and at MIT, Victor expresses significant conflict in his definition of manhood and his future vision of himself.

1. Future Vision and Background (1 pg.)

V’s future vision of himself: Imagines himself as chief family breadwinner, but questions this role (why is he taking on so much stress? Why is he assuming that his female partner would not have the same aspirations as he?). Aspires to be a pediatrician, but some male peers react to this as a “woman’s job” and encourage him to pursue a more “manly” and “prestigious” specialty within medicine, such as neurosurgery.

2. Analyzing V’s Conflict: Social Learning Theory - Role Models

Influence of parents- traditional gender roles (Father worked two jobs—carpenter/electrician, mother worked in the home raising four children). **Behavioral Reinforcement:** Praise by both parents for Victor’s modeling himself on his father. **Connection with readings:** Lorber (idea of opposite gender roles, gender as “taken for granted”); Friedan –the idea of domesticity as women’s domain; parallel concept of a “masculine mystique.”

3. Influence of other adult role models- teachers, personal physician (female pediatrician).

Victor’s choice of models of alternative masculinity: teacher who took a paternity leave, uncle who works as a day-care teacher. Strong female professional as a role model: his pediatrician.

Connection with readings: Kimmel (on different models of masculinity)

4. Influence of MIT: overall culture of meritocracy, friends, professors, courses.

Egalitarian models of gender: female peers and professors who have serious professional commitments as well as families. Current female partner does not want children because of her professional aspirations. Victor experiences conflict between his family as a role model and a more egalitarian lifestyle.

Connections with readings: articles on women in science; reference to Stone-Blackwell marriage contract and Grimke’s letter.

5. Conclusion: Summarize analysis of V’s life and future vision; larger implications of this individual case for thinking about gender and socialization.

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