

Sample Student Writing: Comparative Argumentative Essay

Grade this student received on this assignment: A

Positive aspects of this work: the student explains in detail two possible objections to Robeyns' argument, makes a good effort to explain why the objections are persuasive, and then effectively demonstrates why the objections are ultimately wrong (that is, refutes the objections without simply stating that they are wrong or simply restating parts of the argument the student aims to defend)—which is to say that the student takes the objections seriously and engages the counterarguments on their merits.

Problem-areas with this work: the student's explanation of Robeyns' argument, which draws on the complicated ethical theories of Sen and Nussbaum, is highly problematic, since there are technical and complicated concepts that the student neglects to explain in any meaningful detail—which leaves readers who may not be familiar with these theories unclear about Robeyns' argument—the logical analysis of each authors' reasons and evidence is largely absent, and little effort is made to explain the underlying warrant for each author's respective argument.

Imagine feeling underestimated by others or feeling your skills are not valued because of your gender; this is how the social issue of gender inequality feels to some female members of society. Throughout history, gender inequality has been a major social issue. Gender inequality refers to the unequal treatment of individuals based off of their gender. Countries all around the world have struggled with this social issue for centuries. Ingrid Robeyns wrote an article that argues gender inequalities persists in many areas of society. Robeyns' claim in her article is that inequalities and discrimination need to be solved and references towards Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's philosophies. The main idea from Sen is the capability approach, and the theory of justice from Nassbaum. In the capability approach "when making normative evaluations, the focus should be on what people are able to be and to do" (Robeyns). Normative evaluations set everyone involved on a same neutral standard in order to see what someone is truly capable of without discriminating factors such as gender. This approach is meant to help bring more equality for women in many areas of society such as the workforce. In Sen's capability approach, gender needs to be overlooked and the women's qualifications need to be evaluated. Nassbaum's theory of justice is tied to the capability approach but it includes "both aggregative considerations as well as aggregative principle" (Robeyns). This is where discrimination and inequality plays a role in this article. The theory of justice brings a non-discrimination principle while the capability approach is being applied. In Robeyns' argument, these social rules and regulations of the capability approach and theory of justice are supposed to create equality to all humans in society.

Hanna Rosin argues the opposite in her book "The End of Men: And the Rise of Women." In Rosin's central claim she says that modern women are becoming more powerful in the workforce and the home. In Rosin's argument, the rise of power for women has brought women to the same standard in society as men. I personally believe that around the world equality between men and women has become a norm in society. Although that I side with Rosin, for the sake of this paper I will be arguing Robeyns' side that gender inequality is still a huge presence in many areas of society, but especially in the workforce, government, and the home. In the workforce, women are given unequal pay, positions, and are looked down on as less valuable than men.

In the workforce women in multiple ways are looked down on as less valuable than men in many fields. A major inequality women face in the workforce is unequal pay. In fact, women are only paid

79 cents per dollar that men make (IWPR). Women are paid less compared to men even while working in the same position (Robeyns). An objection that could be brought up is that the men and women being unequally paid is not an issue as long as women accept the lower wage. This statement could essentially be why men and women are not paid equally. Even though some women except this lower wage, it does not make it morally right to treat women so unfairly. It becomes morally wrong because on average, women “receive more degrees than men” (IWPR). Yet, women still on average make less than men. How do employers expect the women with more qualifications than their male competitors be okay with the lower pay? No one likes the feeling of being treated as less valuable in any circumstance. Value is also tied into Sen’s capability approach. Sen argues that when people are evaluated on what they are and can be, it has a domino effect that leads to giving people a life “they have reason to value” (Robeyns). Women should not receive treatment that is clearly unwanted. Unequal pay is not the only area of the workforce where women are treated unfairly.

In many work fields, men tend to have higher positions and receive more promotions than women. Most leadership positions that are occupied by a majority of men tend to be more in politics and business corporations. This once again shows inequality towards women with the fact that women on average are more qualified than men. In this area of inequality, the capability approach can play a huge role in creating an equal work environment. Research has shown that even though women and men are both capable of being leaders, women face many barriers to reach a leadership title. Studies show that reasons “such as family responsibilities, inexperience, or women not being tough enough” are acting as large barriers towards leadership positions for women (Pew Research Center). The normative evaluations of the capability approach could lead to leaders based on their qualifications instead of looking at the person’s gender first. An objection that could be made here is that it is not possible to look at both genders completely neutral. Even though this statement has truth due to the underlying gender roles engraved into our culture, the capability approach is a structural system that doesn’t need to include genders. If an employer were to only look at numbers or reviews on an employee without looking at names and faces, the objection at hand should not be an issue. Even though these inequalities could be unintentional due to gender roles, they still bring an unfairness towards women. Instead of allowing these unintentional inequalities to keep reoccurring, they need to be mentioned and resolved. Women deserve to be in those positions if they are qualified. The roles of women in society should not create a doubt that they are less likely to be successful in a high leadership position. These doubts make gender inequalities persist and they will continue to persist if they are not confronted. The doubts of women in a leadership role in a political sense slows the process of narrowing the gap between men and women greatly.

Another area of society that the capability approach refers to is “political participation” (Robeyns). A huge majority of the U.S. Congress are male. This year women only held 18 percent of Congress (Kurtz). An objection that can be made here by someone like Rosin is that women are equally included and participate in government in countries around the world. While this is true in countries such as Norway, women are not equally included in the government of some of the most powerful countries such as the United States and China (Kurtz). These are the countries that have the biggest influence on the world and they have some of the lowest numbers in female participation in government. This very low of female leadership in politics has inequalities written all over it. Not only does it exemplify again that women, despite their qualifications, are unlikely to be promoted a leadership role, but are not given an opportunity to voice an opinion inside Congress. Someone could make the objection that Congress is making an effort to build equality for women. Congress is where rules and regulations are made and if a low percentage of women are involved, the rules and regulations are most likely to benefit the males of society. In order for equality to develop, women need to be involved in the process as well. In other words, Congress can start by including the

minority group to solve the inequality issue. An area that includes too much of the women's role that creates inequality is in the home.

Nassbaum's theory of justice is the non-discrimination principle for society and social norms. One social norm that still discriminates women are constant household chores. An objection by Rosin could be that with women's rise in power, the household is becoming more equal in house chores. This statement could be true for some households but, evidence shows that women are still in charge of most roles around the house. According to a recent research, unmarried couples living together tend to "take on the traditional roles when it comes to housework" (Kelley). On top of taking on these roles in the household, these women could also be working as well. In reality, these women are technically working two shifts in one day. After a full day of work, coming home to cleaning, laundry, and cooking is not fair to women. With women in the working field today, the objection that women have leisure time around the house while the male works can not be made here. Now in these particular households, women are working more than the male of the house. In order to create equality, men need to start helping women with their traditional roles. After all, women have already taken on traditional roles of men going into the workforce, so what's stopping men from helping with the household chores?

Gender inequality creates such an unfairness towards women and it all roots from the underlying traditional roles society has created for women. Society needs to look past the traditional roles of women and start looking at them as just another citizen. If a woman has the qualifications to lead a certain position, her particular roles outside of the work place should not be put into consideration whether or not she can excel at the job. If people in society believe that gender inequality is still a major social issue, start by including women in society. To begin with including women in society allows the voices of women to be heard and eventually make changes. In a household, if something is dirty, it shouldn't matter who cleans the mess. It also shouldn't matter who cooks when dinner time is getting close. The household needs to stop waiting for the woman of the house to take action when it comes to the chores. Women have done their part contributing towards gender equality by taking on the traditional role of men in the workforce. Now it is time for males to share the traditional role of a woman as well.

Works Cited

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