



SECTION 5

Time – 50 minutes

Turn to Section 5 of your answer sheet to write your essay.

Important Reminders:

- You have 50 minutes to write your essay.
- A pencil is required for the essay. An essay written in ink will receive a score of zero.
- Do not write your essay in your test book. You will receive credit only for what you write on your answer sheet.
- Write legibly.

As you read the passage below, consider how Claire L. Stacey uses

- evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims.
- reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence.
- stylistic or persuasive elements, such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas expressed.

Adapted from Claire L. Stacey, "It's time to look at how we value home care work," originally published on The Conversation on February 11, 2015.

There are two million home care workers in the United States. They change diapers, administer medications, bathe and dress people and transfer the immobile from one place to another. They also take care of tasks that are mundane annoyances to most of us—doing the dishes, cooking, vacuuming—but that make a world of difference to an elderly or disabled person who hopes to maintain a sense of dignity and security as they age at home.

And they do this without overtime pay or minimum wage protections. That is because home care workers are not covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act. This legislation has historically excluded them (and other domestic laborers) from its purview because of something called the "companionship rule." Believed to be "casual" companions to the elderly rather than laborers in the conventional sense, home care workers—even those working at for-profit agencies—have long been denied the security of a living wage. And this is despite the fact that they are on the front lines of care provision for a rapidly expanding population of elders—by 2025 there will be over 65 million Americans over 65. The profession is expected to grow, with one million more home care workers by 2022.

As many Americans struggle to piece together care for their elderly or disabled loved ones, it's time to look at how we value home care work.

The median hourly wage for a home care worker in the US is \$9.38, with considerable variation across states. What does that mean over the course of a year? In terms of median annual wages in 2012, the lowest ten percent of home care aides earned less than \$16,330 whereas the top 10 percent earned \$27,580.

According to the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute, over half of aides live in households whose income puts them at 200% below the poverty line. One in three have no health care coverage and 56% rely on public assistance, including Medicaid, Supplemental Nutritional Assistance or child care subsidies, to make ends meet.

High turnover is a problem in home care and there is increasing evidence that higher pay is associated with a greater likelihood of aides staying on the job. Further studies are needed to confirm the benefits of home care with respect to expense and health outcomes, but existing evidence suggests that for many seniors, aging at home is both cost effective and psychosocially beneficial.

Home care aides take on the paid care work that few others are willing or able to do. They attend to bodies and minds

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE 



to help ensure that other human beings—many of them in the last years of life—are well cared for and able to live in their homes.

As more of us face the realities of aging, or caring for aging parents, we can no longer afford to ignore the inequities associated with our system of paid care. We have to connect the dots between our personal crises—a dying father, a sister with cancer, a child with a severe disability—and the crises faced by the millions of home care workers who help us manage the daily realities of caregiving.

The time is ripe for a new conversation about care. To begin, we should reconceive of care as not only an act of love or altruism, but also as a form of labor, worthy of fair compensation.

We have to rethink our understandings of paid work. Is it work to listen to someone telling stories of days gone by?

Is it work to hold a dying person’s hand so they feel less afraid? Is it work to wheel an elderly person to the park so she can feed the birds?

While we lack clear answers to these questions, most people acknowledge that there would be real consequences if aides weren’t paid to perform these tasks: the elderly and disabled would suffer both physically and emotionally, families would be burdened financially, and the costs of care would likely rise as people leaned disproportionately on institutional care.

We seem to understand on some level that home care should be compensated, but we are conflicted about how much value – or money – we should assign to the labor.

As the struggle for fair working conditions for care workers continues, Americans should begin to look carefully at their own care arrangements and ask themselves this question: What is care worth?

Assignment: Write an essay in which you explain how Claire L. Stacey builds an argument to persuade her audience that Americans must reconsider how they think about home care work. In your essay, analyze how Stacey uses one or more of the features listed in the box above (or features of your own choice) to strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of her argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage.

Your essay should not explain whether you agree with Stacey’s claims, but rather explain how Stacey builds an argument to persuade her audience.

STOP

If you complete the problem set before time elapses, you may review your responses for this section.

Do not view or begin working on any other sections.