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Writing Task 12: Proposal Argument

In Chapter 4 of *Thinking 101*, Woo-Kyoung Ahn spotlights the dangers of only utilizing specific examples to make decisions. Two concepts she highlights are the law of large numbers and regression towards the mean. The law of large numbers “simply means that more data is better”(Ahn 110). Having more information and data on a specific topic would increase a person’s confidence in making a decision on that subject. It would be more generalized and applicable compared to one specific example. Regression towards the mean is the idea that over the course of time, one’s performance on anything will gradually get closer to the average of all performances. As illustrated by a 100-question true/false test, students who score more on the extreme ends of the scoreline, will gradually get closer to a mean score between 40 and 60 the more they take a test with the same structure but with different contents(Ahn 117). The student’s gradual movement towards the mean is completely independent of their “knowledge, motivation, or anxiety”(Ahn 117). It is purely due to the concept of regression towards the mean.

An issue that occurs with only using specific and singular examples to make decisions that are shown by these two concepts is job interviews.

A job interview is a brief conversation between and recruiter and a candidate that only reveals a glimpse about an interviewee. Because interviews are often the last stage of the hiring process(after resumes and recommendation letters), there is not much variance between the final candidates, leaving any random factors available to greatly influence the hiring process(Ahn

121). Because any factors ranging from the recruiter's mood to the interviewee's performance can arise during a meeting, interviewers do not get the full picture of the candidate they end up hiring (Ahn 120). This violates the idea of the law of large number particularly because interviewers' perceptions of applicants is limited and biased due to the short meeting time and variety of factors that can influence the outcome of an interview. Interviews also show regression of the mean because random factors like an applicant having cold feet and performing horribly on the interview can lead to a recruiter misjudging whether they would be a good fit for the company or not(Ahn 122).

This problem not only affects the interviewers and job applicants but also the employer the interviewer works for and other job applicants. Based on whether the candidates were hired or not, the company could've performed better or worse in achieving their goals. Based on the hiring process, job applicants can tend to put on a facade and perform their absolute best in the interview, knowing that they get hired only based on what the interviewer knows. This issue has brought a lot of difficulty to those applying for jobs because there are so many things that can go wrong or are out of an interviewer's control that can affect their ability to land a job. To address this problem, job interviews should be replaced in favor of trials at a job.

Trials at a company best help a recruiter gauge whether an applicant is fit for the job or not because they can more properly assess a candidate in the workplace. Asking an interviewee to perform a couple of tasks that display different aspects of themselves on the job helps a recruiter get a clearer idea of the candidate they want to hire because they will be able to gather more data about the candidate. In Ahn's example, she was asked to come up with questions about her teaching philosophy and research plans and answer the questions herself(Ahn 122). This task helped her recruiter understand what type of teacher he would be hiring and what her plans were

as a professor at Yale. It also helped him gauge if she would be a good fit in accordance with Yale's values and beliefs. Assessments like Ahn's provide insight into a candidate's varied performances in different aspects of the job. This idea is in accordance with regression toward the mean and the law of large numbers because recruiters can get a larger amount of data to have an overview of an applicant. This benefits applicants because they get to showcase their true selves and are in control of their destiny regarding this job. This also benefits the employer in the end because they will have more information to make a rational decision on the best candidate to help them achieve their goals. In the end, both sides have the best chance of getting what they want out of the hiring process.