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Rhetorical Analysis

Who Wins: Is it Nature or Nurture?

Sarah Kershaw, a well-known reporter for the New York Times, emphasizes the debate on Nature vs. Nurture in her article, “In Studies of Virtual Twins, Nature Wins again,” published in September of 2008. Kershaw reinforces Dr. Nancy L. Segal, by assisting the content of her study and interview though her article. A highly viewed debate, Kershaw publicizes Dr. Segal's scientific research dealing with the contribution virtual twins studied aid in deciphering if genetics or up-bringing play the upper hand in the development of someone’s personality. Dr. Segal has used family, fraternal twins, identical twins and adoption studies to test the controversy out.

Kershaw sets out a clear image about what happens to children when they come into a family fewer than nine months apart, Dr. Segal’s definition of Virtual twins. They either enter the family through birth or adoption within the first year of their life. This usually is the result in a couple trying to get pregnant, and having multiple feelers out for adoption. Deciphering whether or not they are alike, similar to parents, or is it mainly in the gene pole that determines personality.

This debate hasn’t come to a conclusion, because it’s a large controversy, but Kershaw wants her readers to be more in tuned with her side in how nature plays in determining personality traits, supporting her claims by the research done by Dr. Segal. Her main focus is on the Curry case. In my analysis of Kershaw’s text I will examine her report on Dr. Nancy L. Segal and show how it contributes to the Nature vs. Nurture debate. Also, I will argue the effectiveness with the argument Kershaw presents.

Kershaw, to help state her arguments wants the audience to be informed of Dr. Segal being a twin as well, to aid her. Helping to build up appeal and connection with the article material and the researcher. She brings up different case studies done by Dr. Segal and the outcomes of each particular one, because of the case studies that helps bring in Kershaw’s logos approach to uphold the central argument. The Curry twins were “[r]aised together essentially from birth, or at least since infancy, virtual twins may be genetic strangers, but they share an environment from an early point in life.”(Kershaw) Most people feel as though your environment shapes how you develop, but Dr. Segal stated “I expected the virtual twins to be more alike than they were because they had been raised together all their lives.” This quote placed in Kershaw’s report really helps to get her point across about the debate. She does in certain parts of the article lean towards the genetic side, not really helping to support her claim. The author wants to guide, hook and pursue the readers in leaning towards genetic makeup. This section makes a pathway for all other information intertwined in the article, because it is stated and discussed thoroughly at the beginning of the article, right after a brief introduction of the Curry sisters.

Bringing in Dr. Segal’s study on the Curry sisters, allows us to be more understanding as to what a particular virtual twin case study is. Deborah and Dave Curry, the parents of the virtual twins were told a month after Deborah became pregnant with Julia, that their adoption went through and where going to become Sara’s parents in a private adoption (Kershaw). She bring in her writing vivid examples, details and images used to engage the reader’s emotions and imagination, resulting in a pathos appeal. This pathos appeal helped to grab the reader’s emotions and really connect with the situation the family was presented with. The two weren’t treated as twins while growing up, Kershaw reports, but the major dissimilarities between the two were a lot more in-depth.(Kershaw)

The twins ended up being completely different because their mother stated that “Sara loves horror films but hates extreme sports; Julie likes feel-good films but loves jumping out of planes with a parachute. “I’ll jump off a cliff but I won’t watch ‘Saw,’ ” Julie said, referring to the gore-filled movie.”(Kershaw) She intertwines how Dr. Segal goes about researching virtual twins in between talking extensively about the Curry case, to address the main case and educate the audience’s minds. This specific area of the article sustain the central claim in terms of demonstrating the twins clear cut differences and how it upholds Dr. Segal’s evidence on nature having the upper-hand.

  In depth testing of the studies plays a key role as well, Kershaw provides various examples of Dr. Segal’s research. She brings in that "[s]everal major twin studies over the last 20 years, particularly those following twins raised by different families, have provided what scientists say is clear evidence that genetics play a greater role than environment in intelligence and a range of personality traits."(Kershaw) Dr. Segal did a Q test, where they thought virtual twins would be more in common, but it was the opposite, there was a stunning differences. She provides Dr. Segals findings, but also shows how even though they seem similar they really aren't as much. Kershaw shows in her article that “[g]enetics plays a huge role. Her research has found that only 25 percent of the differences between twins — virtual, fraternal or identical — can be accounted for by their environment, 75 percent by genetics."(Kershaw) This certain claim in the article, make for a factual based area, providing the readers with a reason to side with her overall claim. It is perfect how she puts this after the case, because it explains it furthermore.

The overall significance of this article is actually fairly important in a lot of everyday topics and activity. All around people are having debates on Nature vs. Nurture and want the perfect answer, so doing and providing explanation of research help to push for a better understanding. It's interesting to know if genetics or the environment shape a person's personality, I know I want the answer. Will I be like my parents as I get older or not? I feel as though Kershaw did convey her claim through the effectiveness or reporting information on virtual twins. She persuaded me with the use of facts, I like information to be backed up. It was the logos that appealed to me. Overall the use of rhetoric, really helped me to get a better understanding of the nature side or the debate. One thing this article does lack is a backbone to the argument she wants to actually get through to the readers.