

Student

Student 1

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ENG 1304.11

Toulmin Essay Sample

### The Captivating Zoo: Conservation or Deterioration?

Issues regarding animals in captivity have risen over the past couple of years and have caught the attention of many fans and workers of the zoo. Throughout time, many animal species have been led to extinction. Zoos often seek to provide protection for endangered species, but many argue that keeping animals in captivity is ultimately harmful to them. While in a chapter of the book *Tigers of the World* Sarah Christie argues that the zoo promotes animal conservation, in the journal article “The Effects of Captivity on the Morphology of Captive, Domesticated and Feral Animals,” Hannah J. O’Regan and Andrew C. Kitchener argue that captivity brings severe consequences to the physical structure of certain animals and negatively impacts their impending release.

“Why Keep Tigers in Zoos?” is a chapter in the edited book *Tigers of the World*, published by Elsevier. In it, the author, Sarah Christie, argues that zoos are vital for the conservation of endangered species (205). Christie works for the Zoological Society of London, England and has vast amounts of experience dealing with captive animals. Her claim is easy to follow and the provision of certain visual elements makes her piece appealing to a broader audience. Regardless of level of expertise, anyone interested in zoos, tigers, or conservation issues would enjoy reading her chapter. Being part of a zoological society, however, could limit her perspective to just the benefits of the zoo, causing her to overlook some of the disadvantages.

Christie claims that “through public awareness, inspiration, [...] education, [and] fundraising efforts,” zoos provide a way to increase conservation of endangered animal species, such as tigers, and prepare them to be released into the wild once their population numbers start running considerably low (205). Her claim of fact is supported by various examples of how zoos promote conservation through each of the aforementioned methods. She takes the reader through a brief history of zoo development and explains how it “began to recognize the importance of conservation” and has adapted to benefit their animals, particularly by setting up the “Species Survival Plan” for endangered creatures (Christie 206-207). Christie ultimately argues that by being kept captive, “zoo animals could play as stock for reintroduction if their wild brethren were to become extinct” (205). More, she uses logos to support the idea that zoos raise public awareness by stating that they draw “more than six hundred million people a year” (Christie 210). Christie later continues to use logos to describe the fundraising efforts zoos have accomplished by listing several campaigns, economic gains, and the distribution of funds between endangered species through various numerical figures and statistics (211-212).

Further, Christie incorporates the use of pathos when addressing the inspirational and educational aspects of the zoo, suggesting that some of the children who visit “may grow up to become committed conservationists, [...] oil company tycoons, politicians, or movie stars, with great potential influence” (210). By romanticizing the idea that our children can grow up to change the world and help save animals, she continues to convince her readers that zoos are essential to conservation. Following this idea, at the end of the chapter she uses ethos as she asserts her expertise and the validity of her argument by indicating that, along with some of the

editors of the book, she works with organizations specializing in zoos and animals (213). The reader can then be confident the information she provides is reliable.

Though her claim seems to be effective, there are certain warrants present that could make or break it. Christie assumes her audience will agree that public awareness, inspiration, education, and fundraising are effective and that conservation is more important than any of the disadvantages of captivity, such as small enclosures and health issues. She also expects the reader to value animal conservation, believe it is an actual issue, and think we should be spending time addressing it. If her assumptions are incorrect, most of her argument, if not the entire claim, may collapse.

On the other hand, in their article “The Effects of Captivity on the Morphology of Captive, Domesticated and Feral Mammals,” published in the *Mammal Review* journal, researchers Hannah J. O’Regan and Andrew C. Kitchener observe the morphological changes seen in captive animals. Both authors work at reputable universities, particularly in departments of anthropology, biology and other sciences. Their research is dense and very detailed with terminology that can only be understood by people who are familiar with morphology and specific animal structures. Therefore, the article would appeal primarily to other individuals educated in fields similar to the authors’. This could be a constraint, since it is not drawing the attention of the average person who should also be aware of the dangers of captivity.

O’Regan and Kitchener claim that domestication and captivity of wild animals could be resulting in morphological changes that are being passed down and could severely threaten future successful reintroduction into the wilderness (217). Their claim is primarily a claim of cause, as they carefully explain how living in captivity has affected the health, physical structure,

and behavior of many animals. It is heavily supported through logos and ethos by numerous references to other studies, scientific facts, statistics, and observations.

The researchers discuss how inappropriate diets and low activity levels are some of the main causes of defects captive animals have suffered. For instance, a study associated a vitamin A deficiency with the “thickening of the cranial vault, cranial asymmetry and herniation [and] increasing paralysis and eyesight loss” (O’Regan and Kitchener 218). However, a “plentiful and rich captive diet” led a “captive-bred alpine ibex” to develop such “large heavy horns” that the “weight resulted in arthroses to the cervical vertebra, leading to constriction of the [...] spinal cord and the resultant loss of motor ability” (O’Regan and Kitchener 219). O’Regan and Kitchener list more examples from different studies of captive animals who have suffered physically due to unsuitable diets. They further argue that as captive animals become more accustomed to captive diets, they are more vulnerable to struggling once released into the wilderness, “where diets will be poorer and less easy to digest” (O’Regan and Kitchener 222). Since releasing endangered animals back into the wild is one of the zoo’s goals, the researchers believe their diet should be adjusted in order for them to thrive in the wilderness.

Moreover, O’Regan and Kitchener discuss the effects of lack of activity on captive animals and the need for environmental enrichment. They discuss the presence of “degenerative spinal disease [...] in big cat skeletons from Knoxville Zoo,” who were recorded to have experienced significant weight loss and a decrease in activity levels prior to their death (O’Regan and Kitchener 223). The researchers then discuss the importance of environmental enrichment, or “the process of encouraging captive animals to display more of their normal behavioral repertoire, which often includes more activity” (O’Regan and Kitchener 224). “Hiding food,

scratching and climbing posts,” and encouraging physical activity helps wild animals in captivity maintain their natural behaviors, thus possibly benefiting future generations that may be released back into the wild (O'Regan and Kitchener 226).

After presenting evidence from their studies, O'Regan and Kitchener end with a sub claim of policy arguing that “more effort needs to be put into enriching the environments of all zoo animals [because] the stocks that we are perpetuating may not be able to be released in a 200-year time” (226). They assume their audience agrees that the current captive animals will not be able to survive in the wild and that the morphological differences presented by the studies are dangerous. The argument is ineffective if the audience's beliefs differ or if they do not consider it a significant issue.

Both articles present arguable and valuable claims with sufficient support. “Why Keep Tigers in Zoos?” is especially effective by being well organized and containing various methods of proof and evidence. However, I would have been more convinced if Christie had added more detail and information to support her claim. On the other hand, O'Regan and Kitchener provided more than enough evidence and examples and relied too heavily on logos. Additionally, the wording would be difficult to understand for anyone not familiar with morphology or biology, which could ultimately limit the influence of the claim. O'Regan and Kitchener were convincing enough for me to want to research more, but not enough to make me share their beliefs. At this point, I stand conflicted between both arguments. However, I can say that I believe animal captivity in zoos is not necessarily bad, but certain adjustments, such as environmental enrichments, should be made in order to make conservation of endangered animals more effective and reintroduction to the wild more successful.

In the end, humans have been responsible for the extinction of innumerable animal species in the past and present. It is time that something is done about it, because these animals contribute to certain ecological services that ultimately benefit us. Therefore, it is important to understand animal captivity in zoos and to determine if this is truly benefiting conservational movements or if it is causing more harm to Earth's animal species.

Andy, really good work! You really break down these articles well and give a complete picture of their effectiveness. You also totally understand warrants, which is rare (because they're tricky). Very impressive there. You didn't give much of a look at overall effectiveness after each article analysis, but you gave a thorough evaluation at the end of the article. You didn't consider pathos/ethos in the second source, but the rest of the analysis was really strong. Nice work, Andy!

Works Cited

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O'Regan, Hannah J., Andrew C. Kitchener. "The Effects of Captivity on the Morphology of

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