Having a dying child changes a family’s life. A mother will do anything she possibly can to aid this child. Likewise, the rest of the family will have to commit in order for their sibling’s well being. During and after a situation like this, life for the family will not be the same. In the movie, *My Sister’s Keeper*, directed by Nick Cassavetes, a happily married couple with two children live their life normally and joyfully until the day they learn that their two year old daughter, Kate, had leukemia and would not live past the age of five.

In the movie Sofia Vassilieva plays the role of Kate, the dying girl, whose illness would not let her live past the five. Neither Kate’s parents or brother were a match with her and thus could not donate anything to aid her with her terminating disease. The parents decided to produce a one hundred percent in vitro child so he/she could give Kate what she needed: bone marrow, blood donations, and stem cells. Cameron Diaz, Sara Fitzgerald, the mother, together with Jason Patric, Brian Fitzgerald, the husband, agreed to have a baby “made in a dish to be spare parts for Kate.” (Breslin) And as soon as their baby was born, they would summit her into numerous surgeries so she could donate what ever Kate needed to live. To me this was a great attention grabber for the movie because it gave the plot originality.

The in vitro child, Abigail Breslin, Anna Fitzgerald, was twelve and she introduced the movie speaking of how she was only made to aid her dying sister. She was the “perfect in vitro
child who would be Kate’s genetic savior.” (Breslin) Ever since she was a newborn she was
summitted to numerous operations because of the different needs Kate had. Now that she is
twelve, Anna files a lawsuit against her parents wanting to be medically emancipated, to have the
rights to her own body. She claims she wants to live her life as a regular twelve year old girl
without having restrictions in her daily activities. Later in the movie however, the audience
comes to find that Kate had actually pleaded Anna into filing the lawsuit. Kate does this because
she had no desire of living anymore, she wants the suffering to end, and the fighting in her
family to end. Kate wanted Anna to be free from the surgeries, she wanted to be at peace and she
wanted to free her family from further suffering.

Cassavetes directed and created an excellent “tear breaking” movie yet he failed to
properly construct and revise Sara Fitzgerald’s role. Sara was portrayed as a loving mother, but
to a point, her character was a selfish. Her main concern since the movie began was her daughter
Kate’s well being and was “not going to let her die.” (Diaz) Sara became a mother primarily
interested in making Kate live and thereby forgot her role as a mother not only to Kate but to
Anna and her oldest son Jesse. Sara had the entire family dedicated to watching over Kate and
her needs. This made Jesse feel ignored and would constantly flee home and Anna grew feeling
unloved.

When Sara received the papers of the lawsuit, she became infuriated and slapped Anna
across the face. This action of hitting her child demonstrated how Sara simply disregards Anna’s
opinion because listening to Anna’s desires meant letting Kate die and she was not going to allow
that. Sara would rather have Anna feeling miserable with her life than to watch Kate die. She
gave up her entire life to watch over Kate’s health and she was not going to let anyone or
anything ruin her twelve year battle.

On the other hand, Brian’s role in the movie served mainly to defend his children. Although he struggled the same battle of keeping Kate alive with Sara, his character understood and stood beside what his children needed. He let Sara take over for twelve years but when the lawsuit came he understood Anna’s point and stood beside her. Personally I loved when he took Kate to the beach because she wanted to see it before dying. He took her even if it meant having an argument with his wife which could lead to getting a divorce. Brian wanted to make sure that his daughter had what she wanted in her last few moments of life.

Looking at Roger Ebert’s professional movie criticism and review of the movie My Sister’s Keeper, he stated that the movie is “an immediate audience-grabber.” He says that the movie is good because of the plot itself. A girl who is twelve was made so she could be spare parts for her dying sister. However, he does mention that the movie is subject to different interpretations to the viewers because some may agree on the lawsuit Anna placed on her parents and others may disagree. The audience’s opinion is controversial depending on their standing point. If a person favors life then he or she would disagree with Anna’s point because if she medically emancipates and decides not to continue to donate to her sister, Kate would die. Others who favor choice, agree with the lawsuit because Anna has a life of her own and she must pursue and live it.

Ebert feels Anna is right to have gone to the lawyer, Alec Baldwin, who proves 90% accuracy on his trials because she is being independent and an achiever of what she believes is correct. He also feels that Anna has been through enough ever since she was born. She has
donated her sister blood, bone marrow, and stem cells and has had to undergo several surgeries and stays at the hospital because of these operations. Ebert discusses the issue that Anna should not give away her kidney to her sister because this would limit her physical activities. She will not be able to enjoy her childhood, her teenage years and many other activities she should be experiencing as a teen and even as she grows older.

Ebert also discusses how Taylor, Kate’s dying boyfriend, gives *My Sister’s Keeper* its best element because he makes the movie “tender, tactful and very touching.” (Ebert) His opinion about the appearance of this boy in the movie was to distract the audience from the entire discussion and constant fighting of the Fitzgerald family over the lawsuit. Taylor allows the audience to see that Kate in spite of her terminating disease was able to live a life like any other teenager. With this romance, Cassavetes diverted the movie aside from the tragic family disputes and turned it into a romantic love story between Kate and Taylor, and what they got to live for a while. This romance gave the movie more realism, Ebert stated.

Regarding Diaz’s role as the mother, Ebert believed that her character demonstrated her fierceness in wanting to solve and win a case in her private life. Since she was a successful lawyer and won most of her cases while in practice, she now sees Kate’s disease as a case she must win as well. Since Sara won cases most of the time, she now feels she must fight to keep Kate alive. This is her most intense case and she has won it for twelve years by having kept Kate alive past her expected death at five. Ebert agrees with the role of Sara Fitzgerald.

Both my opinion and Ebert’s agree on many factors of the movie *My Sister’s Keeper* yet we disagree on one point. We both think that it was a great movie with an excellent plot and attention hook. The idea of having parents “make and create” a perfect match for their dying
daughter was definitely a grabber. We believe that Anna has suffered her entire life and she now has the right to live her own life and enjoy being a kid. We feel she should not be worried of limiting her activities for the sake of helping her dying sister. For these reasons Ebert and I agree on the fact that Anna has the right to her “medical emancipation”, so she could have the right to her own body.

Ebert and I also concord when we say that Anna’s family is near perfect and that the only disfunction in it is Kate’s disease. The disease was not only killing her, but it was killing her family as well. “Beneath the exterior there were cracks and resentments” (Patric) that threatened the well being of the Fitzgerald family. The constant fighting between Brian and Sara, Jesse feeling ignored, and most importantly Anna having gone to a lawyer and having sued her parents portrays the family disfunction. The fact the Sara disregarded everyone’s opinion and did what she thought was correct without anyone else’s opinion, led the family to slowly break.

We think that Brian’s role as the father, served mainly as a mediator. He was in the middle of every battle at home and he was constantly overruled by his wife. He had no voice in the movie until the end when he confronted Sara and took Kate to the beach with or without Sara’s approval. All through the movie Brian was more of a secondary character yet he proved himself after the scene of the beach. Brian defended what he thought was correct and stood by Anna’s side when she filed the lawsuit, he understood her point and could not believe he had let his daughter suffer so much for the past twelve years. Overall Ebert and I believe he had a fairly good role but his character stood out towards the end of the movie.

In the role of Sara, Ebert and I disagree as to what we think Cassavetes wanted her to represent. To me Sara’s role and character in the movie, made her be disliked by the audience.
She was set as a person who did not care about her husband, as a person who did not notice her son, and in a way she despised Anna for wanting to have the right to her body and stop being Kate’s savior. I felt she was a selfish mother who only cared about Kate’s life and no one else’s. Ebert believed that Diaz’s role was her merely wanting to save her daughter Kate at all possible cost. He felt Sara viewed this battle as another win in her life, but this win was not in her professional life but in her private one. He thinks that this was a good touch in the movie to have portrayed the mother so involved and dedicated into saving her daughter’s life because it gave the movie a sense of reality and portraying how women would actually act in this situation.

The movie *My Sister’s Keeper*, reflects the life of a model family and how a death sentence slowly split the family members apart. Roger Ebert in his critique for this movie highlighted major aspects which I myself thought of when watching the movie. The idea of having an in vitro child be subject to various operations to aid her dying sister, made the movie so intriguing and different from many others. The plot of this movie was unexpected and completely unpredictable. Overall the movie was great because it excelled in every aspect and most certainly because it was emotionally appealing to its viewers. I give the movie *My Sister’s Keeper* directed by Nick Cassavetes, thumbs up.
Works Cited

