

Empowerment from the Stars:

Rookie's "Ask a Grown" Video Series and the Accessibility of Feminism

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Through ethnographic research, this study discovers how *Rookie's* "Ask a Grown" video series makes feminism more accessible to its young female audience through peer and celebrity influence. The research includes analyses of an "Ask a Grown" video and its accompanying comments section, as well as an in-depth interview concerning one young woman's engagement with the text. The study finds that the "Grown" makes her advice relatable to her audience through shared experiences and emotions, which encourages the viewers to use similar tactics when sharing advice with their peers in the comments section. With this in mind, this study considers how viewers use the comments section to apply the advice from the video to specific aspects of their own lives, while simultaneously empowering fellow viewers with which they have shared experiences. Thus, the research carries implications for how young girls find empowerment in their female identity and further explore feminist values through their interactions with prominent media figures as well as with their peers.

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The accessibility of feminism to young girls is particularly interesting given the ways in which it manifests in online blogs—a media format increasingly accessible to young people. One such blog is *Rookie*, a website created by Tavi Gevinson, who describes it as “a platform for young people to talk about what feminism means to them” (Mulkerrins, 2015). *Rookie* uses a number of different ways to engage young girls with feminist ideas and values, one example being the “Ask a Grown” video series. This series involves a prominent media figure serving as the resident adult, or “Grown,” who answers audience-submitted questions and gives advice pertaining to romantic relationships, self-esteem, and friendship. This research will examine this series, as well as its accompanying comments, to discover how its goals fit into *Rookie*’s overall contribution to feminist discourse.

The research seeks to make meaning of how the “Ask a Grown” series uses a prominent media figure to empower and make feminism accessible to its young, female audience, while further examining how young girls use the series as a way to negotiate their own female identity. Following in-depth analyses of the chosen texts as well as an individual interview, conclusions can be made about the video series and its accompanying comments sections; through her involvement in the video, the “Grown” occupies a position of influence due to a combination of her well-known status and relatable advice. In seeking confidence in their own female identity, young girls see the “Grown” as a role model. They find empowerment in the relation of her experiences to their own, and demonstrate this confidence in the comments section by seeking more individualized advice from their peers, or referencing their own experiences when giving advice to others—a strategy similar to that of the featured “Grown.” Thus, it becomes clear that girls better understand their female identity through the relation of their own experiences to those of others, and the presence of a well-known media figure—who appears relatable despite prominent success—provides greater accessibility to finding empowerment in feminist values.

The following literature review takes past ethnographic studies into account when examining past literature concerning girl studies, online blogging, feminism and celebrity influence. These findings provide insight into the research and its significance going forward.

To begin, it is necessary to understand the importance of the relationship between girls and media. Exploring this relationship, Linda Duits uncovers information while both interviewing and observing an 8th grade Dutch classroom. Duits discovers the importance of media as girls in the classroom “instantly put forward popular music and television as favored conversation topics” (Duits, 2010). When given an activity to express self-identification through photos, Duits finds that “the frequent reoccurrence of popular media in [the girls’] photos confirm[s] that media [are] important tools” used in self-expression (2010). Thus, it is clear that media play key roles in the lives of young girls, particularly when used in self-expression.

Building on Duits’ study, Eszter Szűcs’ textual analysis of the website gURL.com contributes further insight into how girls shape their identity through media. Szűcs focuses specifically on participation in online communities, finding that girls mostly engage with topics in which they are interested. By translating daily interests into engagement in more political issues, Szűcs argues that “their possible political position originates in the very privacy of their lives, personal experiences and attempts to negotiate their everyday realities” (Szűcs, 2015). Furthering Duits findings, Szűcs reveals that media’s role in the self-expression of young girls manifests in online communities, where interests can be utilized to make connections.

Many scholars take narrower approaches and specifically research the participation of girls in online blogging. One such scholar is Jessalynn Keller, who researches the feminist implications of two online blogs—FBomb.com and *The Seventeen Magazine Project*—as well as interviews four bloggers about their engagement with either blog. Regarding her textual analyses of both, Keller states that the posts included on the websites “show an impressive engagement

with media criticism and critical thinking skills” (Keller, 2012), as the blog format encourages girls to “talk back” and challenge existing ideologies. Further, in her interviews, Keller finds that girls engage with blogs “as a method for both network and community-building,” and view them as being “uniquely accessible to a diversity of girls” (2012). Through their ability to connect many bloggers from a variety of backgrounds and ideologies, blogging communities “allow girls a space to become more engaged in public life” (2012). Thus, while girls’ initial attraction to blogging communities may lie in personal interests, their subsequent participation encourages engagement with diverse perspectives and has the potential for political effects.

Szücs would agree with this statement and further define these “political effects” as those regarding discourses surrounding the girl identity. He claims that girls’ engagement with blogging communities enables them to “negotiate the notion of girlhood that public narratives impose” (Szücs, 2015) and, as a result, offer innovative ways of expressing feminist agency.

It is clear that in their studies, Keller and Szücs find girls’ involvement in online blogs of worthwhile study into girls’ engagement in feminist discourse. Both see online blogs as contributing to the feminist dialogue in two ways—one that encourages innovative new ways for girls to participate in feminist politics, and another that supplies girls with a platform to counter negative stereotypes pertaining to their own identities. Regarding the first type of engagement, Keller finds that girls use blog communities as a way to “connect their personal experiences to a larger social, political and cultural context” (Keller, 2012) through exchanging comments with other bloggers. More importantly, this connection serves to be both “personally empowering and fostering of a broader form of feminist activism” (2012) in a community setting. In this manner, both the personal and relational aspects of blogging communities provide opportunities for young girls to participate in feminist politics in ways they find personally meaningful.

The second key importance of the blog in girls' engagement with feminist discourse is its ability to provide girls with a platform to discuss, redefine, and counter stereotypes. Noting the diverse levels of familiarity within feminism that may be present in a blogging community, Szücs claims that a variety of understandings results in "definitions getting repeatedly contested, challenged, and redefined" (Szücs, 2015), allowing for a more critical analysis of what different stereotypes do exist. Keller would agree with Szücs, but further add the importance of blogging communities as a platform for teenagers to interact with feminist discourse and thus "challenge gender norms and ageist assumptions that youth are uninterested in social change" (Keller, 2012). Thus, the various levels of understanding of feminism create a platform where girls can negotiate stereotypes, particularly those regarding the supposed apathy of youth.

In addition to her study on the intersection of feminism and digital media, Keller furthers her study with another that focuses on a single blog in particular—*Rookie*. In providing textual analysis on *Rookie* as well as analysis on Gevinson, the creator, herself, Keller seeks to discover how Gevinson uses digital media in the form of *Rookie* to rearticulate 'girl power' narratives and make feminism accessible to her young, female readers. Gevinson's engagement with innovative blogging media lies in creating and receiving user submissions of feminist texts. This submission-based format allows girls to "experiment with feminist identities, and affords them a chance to connect with other feminist girls and women" (Keller, 2015) through their creations and the conversations they ignite. Furthermore, Gevinson encourages girls to be media producers by motivating them to "create alternative representations of girlhood that challenge those created by commercial culture industries" (2015). In this way, Gevinson's creation of *Rookie* provides girls with a platform that encourages creation of media as a way to spark feminist discussions.

This accessibility to feminist discourse as provided by *Rookie* may be enhanced in *Rookie*'s inclusion of the "Ask a Grown" video series. The use of a celebrity as the "Grown"

may have implications for the ways in which the *Rookie* reader engages with the advice given, especially in its relation to their own female identity. In studying how adolescent girls make sense of celebrities in the context of self-identification, Laura Duits and Pauline van Romondt Vis found that “celebrities offer lifestyles that girls can aspire to or avoid, and . . . provide them with possibilities for and empowerment in their own lives” (Duits & Van Romondt Vis, 2009). This insight may be true of *Rookie* readers as well and has implications for how the use of a prominent media figure in the “Ask a Grown” series affects the accessibility of feminism for *Rookie*’s young audience.

It is true that existing literature, such as that stated above, have researched any and all combinations of girls’ studies, digital media and feminist discourse. Though these topics are crucial in understanding the relation between gender and media, the unique aspect of celebrity involvement, as demonstrated in *Rookie*’s “Ask a Grown” video series, proves fascinating in its influence on this relationship and the accessibility of feminist ideas to young girls—particularly within interactive, blogging environments. Inattention to such influences has left studies of gender and media more generalized. Introducing prominent influences—in this case, famous voices—may provide insight on how young female audiences make sense of feminist discourse and their identity as a female.

This research was conducted in two parts, through a textual analysis and an audience analysis. This combination offered separate findings that proved significant both individually and when considered in relation to one another.

Regarding the textual analysis, the chosen texts were quantified as a single “Ask a Grown” video and its accompanying comments section. The two were chosen together—as opposed to one or the other—due to the combination’s significance in the context of the blogging community. A blog represents a back-and-forth between the publisher and audience, and

therefore any content should arguably be reviewed with both parties in mind. In this specific case, an 8-minute “Ask a Grown” video featuring Gillian Jacobs was reviewed as well as the 42 comments posted within a week of the video being published (Jacobs, 2012). The video and comments reviewed included enough insight to form an argument, thus the analyses of additional videos and their accompanying comments were not necessary.

This text was best analyzed through critical discourse analysis. The “Ask a Grown” video series and its comments arguably contribute to the feminist discourse present on the *Rookie* website, thus producing ideological meanings. Considering the texts’ linguistic, contextual and visual significance, critical discourse analysis proved to be the best tool for understanding media-produced meanings.

In collecting data necessary for the textual analysis, categories were built around attributes of typical advice columns, particularly concerning those that focus on empowerment. Both the comments and the video itself were studied for their representations in three categories—identified in more depth in further analysis. Notes were taken on the video and the comments’ inclusion of these categories introduced patterns that helped shape the argument.

Regarding the audience analysis, the chosen method was an in-depth individual interview, in which I interviewed one individual in order to obtain information about her own experience with the selected media. This method seemed the best way to obtain a detailed account of one individual’s thoughts and engagement regarding *Rookie*’s “Ask a Grown” series, as the purpose of the research was not to generalize the findings to a broader population.

The questions included in the interview protocol were written to ease the participant into the subject matter; starting with questions about social media in general, the interview then addressed the *Rookie* website specifically before transitioning to further analysis of the selected “Ask a Grown” video and its subsequent comments section. I interviewed Emily, a 19-year old

student at the large, public university who frequents blogs and social media accounts, particularly those of celebrities. The interview took place in a coffee shop, where the environment allowed for privacy and a comfortable amount of background noise. Lasting 40 minutes, the interview included two breaks in conversation; one break lasted seven minutes during which Emily and I watched the selected “Ask a Grown” video, as well as one break lasting three minutes for Emily to review the comments associated with the video.

With its completion, the interview was transcribed and used in further analysis. Six codes were identified in Emily’s responses, allowing for the creation of multiple themes based on the intersections between two or three codes at a time. These themes—identified in more detail in later analysis—were then studied to produce an overarching argument that sought to answer the driving research question and provide implications for further research.

In conducting this research, it was important to examine ethical considerations. Confidentiality was upheld through the assignment of a pseudonym to the participant in the write-up, and informed consent was exhibited in the selection of a participant over 18 years of age, the assurance that her involvement was voluntary, and the obtaining of her permission to record the interview. These measures were taken in order to reduce risk, specifically by respecting privacy and avoiding coercion.

The following textual analysis is represented in three categories—giving advice based in dealing with emotions, giving advice based in action, and the appearance of traits associated with being a role model. Key patterns emerge from this analysis and help shape the critical theoretical lens through which the findings are viewed, as well as the eventual argument.

A common pattern between the categories is the expression of empathy, particularly its use in building a support system. This is demonstrated in the categories of advice regarding emotions, as well as that of advice based in action. In other words, both Jacobs and her audience

describe their own experiences and use them to empower those who were dealing with similar circumstances. This empowerment creates a sense of female solidarity, emphasizing the importance of woman-relationships in validating one another's emotions and experiences. Another key theme is Jacobs' role model status and its implications for the willingness of girls to listen and engage with her advice. Many girls discuss how much they look up to her, and it can be argued that their willingness to provide other girls with advice in the comments is a form of "replication." Thus, these initial themes of empowerment present in the texts—both the power of a role model status and the creation of a support system—identify liberal feminist critique as the most appropriate critical theory through which to analyze the findings.

Liberal feminist critique argues that women face irrational prejudice that can be resolved through non-stereotypical representations and an increase in occupations of powerful positions. In the broader context of feminist discourse, liberal feminist critique places an emphasis on the individual, arguing that if enough individuals fight for feminist values, all women will benefit. In this manner, a blogging community such as that of *Rookie* provides a perfect platform for young girls to express their own feminist values while also engaging with those of their peers. Each blogger is given power through participating in feminist discourse as one person and as a contributor to the individual blogging community. Concerning the "Ask a Grown" series specifically, this critique gives the power to two different groups—Jacobs and the bloggers engaging the comments section—and allows both to define their community as one of empowerment and support.

Given this lens and the preceding patterns found in both Jacobs' video and the comments section, an argument can be made that *Rookie's* "Ask a Grown" video series provides an opportunity for the featured "Grown" to occupy a position of power that uses her own experiences to empower her audience through empathy. Further, the figure's perceived status as

both a celebrity and a relatable role model encourages the girls to become role models themselves, offering public advice to their peers and creating a community of feminist empowerment in the video's comments section. Through the use of critical discourse analysis, these themes can be broken down into their linguistic, contextual and visual representations within the texts and further analyzed for their production of meaning within feminist discourse.

The first theme present is advice based in personal experiences and the use of empathy to support and validate the emotions of young girls. When answering questions in the video such as, "I don't get as much attention as others . . . I'm lonely . . . I feel ugly and insecure," Gillian Jacobs reflects on her own experience and offers insight, without disregarding the legitimacy of the girl's emotions. She responds, "I was lonely too, nobody ever told me I had nice legs or a nice butt, but that's okay . . . don't stop being yourself" (Jacobs, 2012). This emotional validation is reflected in the comments section as well, when one blogger explains her feelings of a similar loneliness. "I still feel lonely and it still sucks," she says, "but I feel a little better knowing that great amazing girls sometimes feel lonely too" (Natalie, 2012). This blogger takes the same approach as Jacobs in addressing self-doubts by recognizing emotions—even the negative ones—and validating them as common occurrences in any girl's life.

This theme of emotional validation through empathy and support is best analyzed through a linguistic approach, particularly in its use of thematic structures. More specifically, when Jacobs responds to the question, she creates a narrative that effectively relates her own experience to that of the audience. She explains her emotions, why she felt as such, and what she learned from them in the long run. Further, within the comments section, viewers replicate Jacobs' linguistic strategies and often rely on stories pertaining to their own experiences when giving advice to others. This creates a support system between Jacobs and her viewers and between the viewers themselves, resulting in a comfortable space where girls can engage in

discussions about feminist empowerment and their own female identities. Thus, Jacobs' telling of her own emotional experiences empowers her audience through empathy, allowing them to occupy positions of power when given a voice to make sense of their own emotions in the comments section.

Much like Jacobs shares her own experiences of emotional sense-making in order to empower girls to do the same, she also draws connections between her past physical experiences and those of the girls she is addressing. In hearing a story about a girl who suffers from poor interpersonal skills, Jacobs is asked the question, "I only have three friends and have trouble making new ones, how do I make new friends?" (Jacobs, 2012) She immediately cites a similar experience of her own and offers actions that worked well for her, responding, "I didn't initially have a lot of friends either, so I really focused on things I liked and enjoyed . . . that's how I met other friends" (Jacobs, 2012). In drawing these connections, Jacobs builds a support network between her and her audience so that the girls feel less alone in their actions and more motivated to share their experiences with others in the comments section. For example, after hearing Jacobs' advice, one viewer comments a similar concern about making new friends, and by doing so defines the comments section as a place to apply the insight given in the video to one's personal life. Consequently, she receives advice from a fellow user to perhaps "just start conversations about food and offer to cook for her!" (Aliceee, 2012). This back-and-forth shows that the context of an advice-based video series not only applies to Jacobs and the user who poses the question, but also extends to the comments sections as well.

The theme of establishing shared experiences as the basis for advice has contextual significance, as this continuation of the conversation is unique to the blogging format—particularly in its inclusion of a comments section. Unlike typical advice columns, the extension of the conversation demonstrated by a comments section allows the opportunity for

individualized empowerment within an online community—one that is familiar, and therefore more accessible, to a generation that is “bound to technology and always in contact with their peers” (Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007). The user is able to apply the advice directly to her experiences, fostering a support system that is “both personally empowering and fostering a broader form of feminist activism and camaraderie” (Keller, 2012), an attribute that Jessalynn Keller argues is an influential aspects of a blogging community for young girls. This individualization results from the comments section makes discussions pertaining to feminist values more accessible to young girls, as it introduces opportunities to relate aspects of their female identity to those of others.

Perhaps a reason as to how Gillian Jacobs was able to inspire a continuation of her advice in the comments section was the combination of her celebrity status and her appearance as relatable young woman. Appearing before a camera against a white wall, wearing a plain sweater and no make-up, Jacobs is portrayed as a person to whom girls can easily relate despite her celebrity status—of which many viewers are aware. Comments including “She’s just so awesome . . . I love her in *Community*!” (Cruicked, 2012) and “Can she please be my second older sister?” (Mirandab17, 2012) reveal the effects that Jacobs’ relatable appearance have on viewers’ perception of her in the comments section, citing how “cool” it is that she, a celebrity, is so down-to-earth. Thus, girls arguably view Jacobs’ celebrity status and perceived relatable persona as being more influential as a combination, rather than one or the other exclusively.

Jacobs’ prominent status and relatable appearance work in tandem to create a visual of her expressed celebrity identity—one that is humble despite success and willing to use pre-celebrity experiences to help others—that resonates with viewers. Linda Duits and Pauline van Romondt Vis support this argument in their research on young girls’ perceptions of celebrities, discovering that girls use celebrity identities as a way to “make connections to their own

everyday worlds” (Duits & van Romondt Vis, 2009). In this case, these connections take place in the comments section, where girls admire Jacobs’ position as a role model and turn that admiration into action as they give advice to others just as Jacobs gave advice to them. Thus, Jacobs’ relatable tone and appearance, in addition to her celebrity status, instills confidence in her young audience to personally take on an empowering role model persona within the comments section.

This research carries implications as to how a blogging format can act as a platform for the emergence of girls taking on a role model persona, whose importance is solidified through the liberal feminist critique. Furthermore, this research contains insight into the way a celebrity voice, perhaps more so than an average voice, may influence an audience and create an accessibility to feminism using personal experience and emotions—an idea which will be studied further using audience analysis.

The following audience analysis was conducted through an in-depth individual interview with Emily, a first-year college student, about her engagement with *Rookie*, Gillian Jacobs’ “Ask a grown” video specifically, and the video’s accompanying comments section. It should be noted that while Emily was once a frequent reader of *Rookie*, she has not visited the website often since her early high school years. Thus, while her older age was a result of ethical limitations, it does provide unfortunate constraints as to which of her responses can be applied to a broader audience (though much of her insight is based in previous experience). Having said this, it should still be taken seriously given the qualities of critical/cultural studies, which seek to gain insight from one’s personal experience, not those of a general population.

The interview itself was recorded and transcribed, from which multiple codes were identified, including the younger age of the viewing audience, an “unchanging essence” present in the viewing audience, celebrities as genuine, celebrities as relatable, the importance of

community and the significance of “being specific rather than general” when giving advice. Following identification, multiple codes were combined to create three distinct themes, including the effectiveness of advice in a young, transition population, the effectiveness of advice as a result of the figure’s relatable nature, and the significance of the comments section in adding specificity and visibility to the dialogue and experiences represented in the video. These themes were further analyzed through a liberal feminist critical lens, identified as the most appropriate for the topic at hand.

Also used in the previous textual analysis, liberal feminist critique is presented in the research question in its emphasis of how girls use the video series to make sense of their personal female identity, thus representing individualization present in both the participant’s experience and the critique’s main avenue of proposed change. This critique will also become apparent in the codes and themes identified in the participant’s responses, to be analyzed in later paragraphs.

The first theme present in the interview was the participant’s understanding that the girls who visit *Rookie* have not yet developed the “unchanging essence” that characterizes teenagers once they are well into high school. Recalling her frequent visits to the website in her earlier years, Emily believes that “the only people reading [*Rookie*] are probably 10-14 years old” because the advice given in the video is only applicable to girls who are “in a transition period.” Emily defines this period as the time before girls settle into the high school environment and, in her opinion, “figure out who they are.” Interestingly, Emily believes Jacobs’ advice mostly benefits “girls *about* to meet new friends”—more specifically, girls who are in middle school and will soon be entering high school. Overall, Emily argues that girls ages 10-14 occupy two roles within the *Rookie* community—they are the ones who most frequently visit the site, as well as the most easily influenced given their age and status as being in a social transitional period.

Given these points, it is clear that Emily somewhat disagrees with the notion that the *Rookie* audience interests different age groups, as she finds it most appealing to young girls of a certain age. Though perhaps controversial, this statement offers insight into how Emily's perception of *Rookie* dictates her belief as to whom the content most benefits. This proves significant within the "Ask a Grown" video, as the ones who benefit from Jacobs' advice are the ones submitting the questions to be answered, thus creating a cycle that combines the viewers and contributors of content into one specific population. The girls' admiration for Jacob's insight is evident in the amount of questions submitted, revealing the extent to which girls use the video as a way to make sense of their female identity. Laura Duits—in her research on the relationship between girls and media—would agree with this statement, arguing, "popular media are important tools in showing who [one] is" (2010). Deirdre Kelly, who studies girls' learning about femininities within online communities, would accept this argument and further point to *online* media specifically as a key tool in girls' self-identification. Kelly argues that online media offer the viewer "more room to be deliberative" in their reactions to online content (2006). This deliberation may prove especially beneficial for the population at hand, who are, according to Emily, in a "transition period" and constantly seeking out new content to help ease the process of self-identification. Thus, girls may use the online video series to question and make sense of their identity during a period of transition in their lives and, as Emily believes them to be "easily influenced," are more likely to take Jacobs' advice to heart.

A second theme was the measure of how relatable a celebrity is and the requirements for her to be considered as such. Specifically speaking about Gillian Jacobs' "Ask a Grown" video, Emily thinks "she came across as super normal in the video," particularly because "she wasn't in full hair and makeup [and] was in her house." Thus, in these examples, Emily defines relatable as partaking in normal activities with a sense of sincerity—often manifesting in appearance (e.g.

no makeup) or familiar and comfortable environments (e.g. in her home). Furthermore, when giving advice, Emily states that a big part of “being relatable” means using specific examples from one’s experience, rather than giving general inspiration. She appreciates that Jacobs related the questions “back to her own life,” as opposed to other celebrities she has seen, whose advice is “very general” such as “be yourself;” in Emily’s opinion, “[girls] hear that from everyone, it means nothing.”

Altogether, Emily’s insight into what makes a celebrity relatable provides information as to how girls relate to some prominent media figures over others. Based on her commentary regarding social media accounts, it is how “average” the celebrities appear when in comfortable settings—such as their home—as well as their displays of “normal activity” that prove them to be relatable. Keller further affirms this argument in her research on how celebrities use online media platforms to demonstrate their authenticity. She argues that a celebrity’s—in her specific study, Tyra Banks’—use of a blog format to narrate how she came to terms with her body or post a photo of herself sans make-up worked as a strategy to “maintain a realness and closeness with fans on platforms they frequent in their everyday lives” (Keller, 2014). Girls find the same relatable aspects in Jacobs as they do in Banks, creating implications for a how a celebrity presents herself and the subsequent amount of influence she holds. Perhaps more interestingly, Emily brings up the point that celebrities are more convincing in their advice when they draw from their own experiences and obstacles, rather than giving “mainstream” inspiration. These three aspects—appearance in familiar settings, displays of “normal” activity, and personalized advice—provide insight into how a celebrity in a “role model” position can prove to be more or less effective in giving advice; like Emily, a girl’s preferred advice is that which they can relate to within their female identity, and thus proves to be more effective.

When given the opportunity to view the comments posted to Gillian Jacob's "Ask a Grown" video, Emily's reactions presented another common theme: the comments section extends the conversation that Jacobs' started, and adds further specificity to the advice given. Emily finds that the comments section "forms a community." She identifies the commenters "as girls who feel insecure and need advice . . . [and] when people comment on their comments, they know there is someone out there who relates to them." Further, Emily claims the sheer number of comments allows girls to "see how many people have watched the video and feel like them." By extending the conversation, "girls can ask the questions that are specific to their lives and get the answers they are looking for"—more specifically, "advice that isn't just 'be yourself.'" Overall, the comments section provides further opportunities for girls to relate to others and embrace individualized advice, which may prove more helpful for the girls in their own lives.

In her observations, Emily draws connections between the comments section and the importance of specificity in building relatable bonds between girls. In her opinion, the comments section allows girls to be more specific in the advice they wish to receive and provides more opportunities to relate to the experiences of others, thus forming a community with other girls. Eszter Szűcs, in her studies on feminism in online spaces for girls, would further this insight by introducing the importance of a community in encouraging engagement with feminist discourse. Szűcs argues that "the networked community encourages girls to embrace a sense of feminist identity," as the interaction "creates a mode of feminist solidarity" (2015). Thus, the comments section of Jacobs' "Ask a Grown" video adds a certain visibility to comments by revealing that young girls are not alone in their struggles, and encourages the creation of bonds between girls of similar circumstances to validate and support one another.

This research carries implications for how young girls relate to media figures, particularly in times when they are experiencing social transition. Furthermore, the research contains insight

as to the reception of girls to advice posed by prominent media figures to whom they “relate,” as well as the subsequent extension of their knowledge to engagements with their peers through a community where girls are able to support and validate one another in their shared femininity. It should be noted, however, that this audience analysis is based on one individual’s engagement with the media alone, and that subsequent studies may provide further insight into topic at hand.

In conclusion, analysis of both Gillian Jacobs’ advice and the accompanying comments solidify the role of the “Grown” as one of empowerment and support to *Rookie*’s young female audience through its use of empathy and personal experience in giving advice. Advancing this finding, analysis of an individual’s engagement with the texts reveals that in addition to relating to the experiences of the “Grown,” young girls use the comments section as a platform to engage with other users in giving and receiving more individualized advice, thus finding empowerment in the relation of their own experiences to those of others.

While no significant contradictory findings come to light, there are connections between the textual and audience analyses, one such being the importance of shared experiences. Findings show that Jacobs often relies on sharing her experiences when giving advice, just as girls interact with each other in the comments section and find empowerment through shared experiences. This is significant in revealing the way that girls make sense of their female identity in a community setting, carrying implications for the power an online blogging format may have in making feminism more accessible to young girls. Furthermore, the two analyses note the significance of a well-known figure—in this case, Jacobs—in giving advice to young girls. Just as the text analyzed the visual significance of Jacobs’ appearance (both physically and that of her environment), girls’ view of Jacobs as a celebrity and as a genuine person enhances the effectiveness of her advice in the eyes of her audience. This is significant because of its implications regarding well-known figures and their influence, more specifically in its findings

on how a celebrity voice may create a greater accessibility to feminist ideals when using empathy and shared experiences to empower others.

In the broader context of feminism, this analysis examines the relationship between young girls and prominent media figures, and how online blogging can offer this relationship a unique space for girls to be introduced to feminist ideas and values. The blogging format offers celebrities a way to present themselves as real, “normal” people on a platform frequently visited by fans, and young girls can use the blogging format to interact with others and their experiences, and consequently find empowerment in their own female identity and self-expression through these interactions. Just as the liberal feminist theory emphasizes the individual woman as a mode of change for a greater population, the blogging format encourages a similar personalization, thus making the values of the feminist movement more accessible to young girls. As a result, girls learn about their own female identity through the opportunity to recognize shared experiences with other viewers of the blog, and the presence of a relatable prominent media figure in encouraging this self-identification and empowerment furthers girls’ accessibility to feminist ideas.

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