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## An Analysis of the Argument on the Issues of Young Women in a Girl's Life

In 2009 documentary, *A Girl's Life*, Rachel Simmons gives us a view into the struggles that teenage girls face daily. The four girls we meet throughout the documentary face issues with self-image, cyberbullying, street violence, and lack of educational opportunities. During the documentary, we see that Simmons believes in the resilience of these young girls. She points out that teenage girls may be given difficult situations, but with determination and courage, they can overcome anything. Throughout the building of her argument, her stance remains clear: problems such as self-image, cyberbullying, street violence, and lack of educational opportunities have become inescapable for young women in recent years.

The film begins with the story of Analuz. She is preparing for her quinceanera, a cultural celebration of a girl's fifteenth birthday. Analuz goes shopping with her mother to find the perfect dress, but becomes disappointed and overwhelmed when she finds out that they do not carry her size in many of the dresses. Analuz's mother reminds her of how beautiful she is, but Analuz cannot help but feel the pressure to fit into society's definition of beauty. The next girl we meet is Libby. Middle school had been great for Libby; she was part of the popular group and she had many friends. That is until one Saturday night when, without reason, all of her best friends sent a very mean text to her. This text was followed by many texts from each of her so called best friends. This went on until Libby could not handle it anymore. She told her mom, and her mom decided she needed to make the other parents aware of what their kids were doing. The parents of the other girls had no idea what was happening over the teen girls' phones. Libby's best friend was quick to regret her actions and apologize. Libby also began to make new, healthier friendships. The next teen, Karla, lived in a poor, dangerous part of Philadelphia. Karla's once harmless group of friends, who call themselves "The Crew," gets into trouble when Karla's cousin is threatened and she and her friends rush to her side to defend her. Threats quickly escalate into physical violence, ultimately severely injuring some of the girls. Lastly, Sonia is a high schooler in New York preparing for college. Since she is not in an area with good schooling systems, Sonia attends The Young Women's Leadership School. Many of the girls that attend the school, including Sonia, are relying on scholarships to be able to go to college. However, Sonia worries that she may not be eligible for scholarships as she had very recently obtained citizenship to the United States. Due to her hard work and confidence, Sonia is accepted at many of the schools she applied to and offered ample scholarships, along with graduating as Valedictorian. Each girl's situations, while vastly different, convey the idea that young girls are confident and resilient and can overcome anything.

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Throughout the storytelling of each girl's situation, Simmons uses ethos and pathos to build her argument. At the beginning of each story, we meet each girl and learn details about their situations. This creates a personal connection between viewers and each girl, whether viewers find themselves relating to a girl's situation, or simply empathizing. This pathos, or emotional appeal, grabs the attention of viewers and hooks them into the story. By giving visuals of the girls' situations, Simmons makes an ethical appeal. First, viewers see Analuz go shopping for a dress, only to be told that they do not carry her size. We also see videos that had been posted on YouTube of Karla getting attacked in the street by another group of girls. This provokes an emotional reaction in viewers because we do not want to see young girls go through this and we naturally have compassion towards them.

One main point Simmons implies in her argument is that the problems the girls are going through are only problems that girls deal with. However, body image, cyber bullying, street violence, and lack of educational opportunities are all problems that young men may struggle with as well. The Cyberbullying Research Center conducted a survey in 2009 and found that "boys are more likely to be threatened by cyber-bullies than girls." (Bullying Statistics) While girls are known for their presence on social media and the mean things they can say, the threats made to boys are often more of a safety concern. Simmons also makes a point that these problems are just now starting to become issues. However, body image has been an issue for women for many years. Beginning in the 1920s, when ladies began to wear less clothing, they also began to feel more pressure to be thin and beautiful. Rollins college describes that time as such: "Body size and weight were discussed as a focus of flapper culture. Whereas prior to the 20s, a shapely figure was ideal, flapper culture embodied the idea of being slender and lean." (The Roaring Twenties) Though with magazines, TV shows, and social media, this issue has become more and more noticeable, it was still present in other cultures.

In conclusion, I agree with Simmons that these struggles are real and relevant for young women these days. However, I disagree with her argument that these issues are new in this century and that they are only problems encountered by girls. To convey her argument more strongly, Simmons should have included a woman of an older generation to compare how each issue is now, compared to how it used to be. It would have also been beneficial if she had interviewed a young male to see the differences between how these issues are relevant for boys as well. Though Simmons argument would have been stronger if she had not cherry picked who she would interview, her presentation of each girl's story was informational and inspiring.

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