



ROMANCE IN THE ROUND: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF YA NOVELS ABOUT FAT GIRLS LOOKING FOR LOVE

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Abstract

The fat heroine has been elevated to cover girl in five 2023 Young Adult romance novels that feature not just big bodies, but dark skin, immigrant cultures and LGBTQ relationships. A content analysis of *The Fall of Whit Rivera* (Maldonado); *The Dos and Donuts of Love* (Jaigirdar); *Her Good Side* (Weatherspoon); *Out of Character* (Miller), and *Then Everything Happens at Once* (Girard) reveals a shift in the descriptive rhetoric of fatness and a move toward stories that embrace acceptance without (too much) guilt or a weight-loss blueprint. The characters recognize the effects of fatphobia and weight stigma in their lives, but fatness is not the books' primary theme. The quest for love; family drama, and self-discovery are more prominent. It's as if the protagonists aren't fat at all.

Keywords

Teenagers, Fiction, Representation, Intersectionality, Body Size

Introduction

The first-kiss romance novel has been on reading lists of teenagers and even older readers since the 1960s, when the subset of Young Adult literature was first established (Curcic, 2023). For decades, the heroine was white, slim, cute and often shy. The object of her affection was mostly similar. A fat¹ character, in the cases that there was one, was relegated to wing-friend. It wasn't only fat characters that were marginalized or left out altogether, but representations of racially diverse, LGBTQ+, physically-challenged or neurodivergent characters were mostly non-existent. Contemporary YA romance novels have shifted toward broader representation and inclusion of racism, mental health, body size differences, gender identities and sexual orientation. Wehmeier (2023) writes that the shift shows the flexibility of writers and publishers to adapt to wishes of readers who want more stories told through diverse voices. An increase in the number of YA novels tackling diverse social issues and cultural trends started in about 2010 and is continuing (Gong, 2021).

Young adult literature is written for a 13- to 18-year-old audience, but 51% of buyers are between the ages of 30 and 44, and 78% of those buyers intend to read the books themselves (O'Sullivan, 2023). Librarians and teachers report that readers 8 to 12 are "reading up," showing that there is a broad range of ages reading books intended for teenagers (O'Sullivan, 2023). This opens the genre to criticism that some stories are overloaded with "adult" themes such as drug and alcohol use, sexual orientation and gender identity, but are also praised for bringing marginalized young people out of the shadows. The fallacy of the "adult" themes argument is that children and teenagers experience them either personally or tangentially via family, friends or authority figures (teachers, etc.). In addition, Glenn (2012) writes the "... transcendent power of literature suggests the potential of counter-narrative literature to allow participants to connect with characters across lines of difference." Literature can serve as a mirror for all readers and yet Foos (2024) writes "... the mirrors fat children are given are too frequently cracked and

¹ I use the word "fat" throughout this paper rather than "overweight," "chubby," "plus-size," "heavy" or "obese." This reclamation of the term follows the lead of Health at Every Size (HAES) (Wann, 2009). For at least 20 years, Fat Studies scholars (LeBesco, 2004; Lyons, 2009, and Wann, 2009) have written about fat communities campaigning for the use of "fat" because "there is nothing negative or rude in the word 'fat' unless someone makes the effort to put it there" (Wann, 2009, p. xii).

shattered with images that cause them to avoid looking in mirrors at all.” Nonfat children can benefit from reading literature with strong fat protagonists providing a “doorway that could lead to compassion, empathy and understanding” (Foos, 2024).

So, in fact, all readers benefit from diverse characters and stories.

There are more authors of color in the YA genre since the 2020 murder of George Floyd, though Black authors and scholars highlighted diversity and inclusion long before then (Royster, 1996). Readers unaware of these efforts by Black scholars may need more explanation about how Floyd’s murder opened doors for authors of color. Reid (2020) connects the dots: Floyd’s death was another incidence of police brutality against Black people; the killing seen widely via smartphone video set off nationwide protests for racial justice; that spurred introspection at many companies as Black employees spoke up about inequities in and out of the office; that racial reckoning spread to media companies and publishing houses; that kickstarted a rush to hire more editors and writers of diverse backgrounds, specifically Black people who brought with them more diversity than their skin color. Complex systems of oppression, or intersectionality as coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), found their way to YA romance novels in 2023. Crenshaw, a Black legal scholar, originally used the phrase to show how Black women were discriminated against via racism and sexism. Today, the term is commonly used to describe overlapping systems of oppression embodied in one person (Carbado, et al., 2019). For example, a fat Black queer woman might be oppressed by racism, sexism, homophobia and fatphobia. Overlapping systems of oppression are on full display in the YA novels analyzed in this paper and it is in this context that I use the term intersectionality. Crystal Maldonado’s *The Fall of Whit Rivera* is part of this study. Maldonado says she writes about fat, Latina girls learning to love themselves when society doesn’t (Yao, 2022). She uses those same adjectives for herself and wished she could have seen herself in books when she was younger. Maldonado said, “People who look like me deserve to have their stories told. They deserve to be celebrated, they deserve joy and adventure, and they deserve happily-ever-afters, too” (Zadoff, 2024). Adiba Jaigirdar, author of *The Dos and Donuts of Love* (2023), echoes these sentiments when she said “It would have been so positive to read a book where a character like me feels comfortable in their body. I think a lot of fat, queer kids struggle with feeling like romance can’t be for them” (Puc, 2025). Jaigirdar’s second YA novel with a fat protagonist, *How to Be at Heartbreaker*, will be published in 2027.

Jenna Miller’s *Out of Character* (2023) is a queer, body-positive love story. She got agent representation in late 2020, another author who it appears benefited from publishers opening up to diverse writers (Miller, 2021).

Fat people are stereotyped as lazy, sloppy, weak-willed and unattractive both physically and sexually (Puhl & Heuer, 2009). While authors and publishers should be applauded for the increased presence of fat heroines, they must also get a simultaneous thumbs down for stories that continue to tell fat girls they are not okay. Too many plot lines include the conventional but harmful theory that fat girls need to reduce their size so that they can be happy and successful (Parsons, 2016). Machado (2017) writes that fat women in books rarely just get to be who they are, and the idea that they can have complex lives, sex or even agency is mostly unimaginable. The loss of weight equals increased popularity, more friends and relieved family — usually mothers — who rejoice that the fat kid will finally be “normal” (Quick, 2008).

There is still work to be done in considering weight bias as a social justice issue (Nutter et al., 2016). The world outside the pages of books written by authors who look (and feel) like their protagonists is not always accepting of fat bodies. Comments on singer Lizzo’s Instagram exemplify this: “The clothes are nice, too bad they can’t fix the obesity problem” (Simic, 2023) and “When did the Bahamas get elephant seals??” (Clark, 2023). There are more positive comments than negative (and fewer in 2025 since Lizzo has lost considerable weight) on her account with 11.6 million followers but the fat-shaming reinforces weight bias. It remains okay to disparage big bodies, not just in private but with a social media megaphone.

Methodology

I came to this content analysis wondering, in part, if the contents of the selected books were in sync with the covers that portrayed fat teens positively. Does the fat girl find love? Could she buy stylish clothes in her size like the covers suggested? Who would pressure her to lose weight and how many diets would she attempt (and ultimately fail)? I expected negativity, self-loathing and heartbreak to be at the fore.

The idea that “the human brain is wired to process images quickly” (Almosawi & Halawachy, 2021, p. 3) guided my assessment of the covers. The covers were used in concert with the stories to signal the shift in 2023 in attitude and presentation. It was my personal reactions to the images that were considered though another study could survey focus group reactions.

I used both deductive and inductive coding in my story analysis guided by Miles, Huberman & Saldaña (2014) who posit that codes can and should emerge simultaneously with first-cycle reading. I analyzed as I read. Deductively, I set out to look for (1) words describing size including “fat” and other common euphemisms; (2) the context of how those words were used; (3) the primary themes of the stories, and (4) examples of size-related social oppression. Then, inductive codes emerged: (1) self-acceptance; (2) intersectionality of fat protagonists (racial,

ethnic, sexual orientation and gender identity), and (3) the authors' positionalities. My own positionality as an over-65 cisgender white fat female who has encountered weight stigma for decades drove my deductive codes.

Physical copies of the books and Kindle versions were used. I read the printed books first, thinking about plot and characters. I jotted thoughts in a notebook as I read and sometimes used colored sticky notes to mark pages. The notes bolstered the deductive codes and drew attention to inductive themes. Switching to the Kindle versions with search capability I was able to quantify the use of certain words and their context. The Kindle versions served as second-cycle analysis and merged my story-line research (qualitative) with an assessment of the numbers of times descriptive language was used or not employed (quantitative).

Content Analysis

The selected YA romance novels in this content analysis are:

- *The Fall of Whit Rivera* by Crystal Maldonado (October 2023)
- *The Dos and Donuts of Love* by Adiba Jaigirdar (June 2023)
- *Her Good Side* by Rebekah Weatherspoon (May 2023)
- *Out of Character* by Jenna Miller (February 2023)
- *Then Everything Happens at Once* by M-E Girard (January 2023)

The books were chosen because the heroine in each is fat and there is a representation of her on the cover. The books also show up on internet searches of "YA novels with fat protagonists." The cover illustrations are a departure from similarly themed books from the previous 10 years, in which fat girls who were worthy of love and self-acceptance on inside pages were not worthy of cover status, their bodies obscured by various design techniques. Covers of books serve as a reflection or representation of a book's contents (Herb & Betts, 2023) and also as a marketing tool. As a sales tool, "covers represent fast-moving publisher trends and expectations of audience perceptions/response contingent to their context" (p. 16). What makes the covers of the 2023 books stand out is that publishers have not shied away from representation of fat teens, albeit with colorful illustration, not photographs.

I include the authors' experiences with fatness along with other identities, expressed in their own words. This is followed by a description of the covers, a synopsis and major themes. Also noted is the intersectionality of characters, the language of body-size description, whether or not fatness is the main theme, and then excerpts from the texts that show social oppression and those that represent self-acceptance.

Title: *The Fall of Whit Rivera* (October 2023)

Author: Crystal Maldonad

Cover: Artist Ericka Lugo. The illustration shows fat, brown-skinned Whit Rivera dominant in the foreground. Her Black male crush is smaller in the background.

In the author's words: "I write stories about fat Latina girls as they figure out who they are, what they want to be, and learn to love themselves in a society that often tells them they're not worth loving" (Yao, 2022).

Synopsis: Rivera may find love if she can get over being dumped by boyfriend Isaiah back in elementary school. Come senior year, they are thrown together to plan a school festival but after all their hard work, her body has other plans. The fatphobia of doctors and other medical professionals makes the pain — physical and mental — of her chronic illness more difficult.

Intersectionality of characters: Race, body size, class, disability

Language of description: "Fat" (used 13 times) is the primary word to label people and refer to body size, often as an adjective ("fat girl," "fat clothes," "fat hate"); "chubby" (2 times) to describe a cat and a little boy; "plus-size" (1 time) referring to sizing of clothing; "Overweight" and "obese" (0).

Fat as primary theme (or not): Mentions of Rivera's size are mostly related to weight stigma in the medical profession. The main theme is the quest for love and health.

Examples of size-related social oppression from the text:

As the protagonist searches for medical help for what she suspects is polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS):

- "In appointment after appointment, under offensively bright lighting with parts of my expanding body spill out of a blue gown, I'd be told the same thing: lose weight" (Maldonado, 2023, p. 12).
- "Finally, after hours of waiting and plenty of casual fatphobia ('Losing weight would be really good for you,' one of the tech nurses suggests all too cheerfully), we get a diagnosis: one of my ovarian cysts has ruptured" (Maldonado, 2023, p. 288).

Examples of self-acceptance from the text:

After getting a new bathing suit for her size 14 body:

- "With a renewed confidence, I slip beneath the water's surface again and slide, enjoying how my body seems to remember every curve of the pool" (Maldonado, 2023, p. 60).

Getting dressed with friends for the homecoming dance:

- "...I am thrilled when I find I'm not even consumed by thoughts of hiding my body; I'm in the moment with my friends, clasping a necklace here and asking to be zipped up there and having a good time" (Maldonado, 2023, p. 325).

Title: *The Dos and Donuts of Love* (June 2023)

Author: Adiba Jaigirdar

Cover: Artist Nabi Haider Ali. A playful illustration shows Irish-Bengali Shireen with a hand on her large hip and the other holding a plate piled high with doughnuts. Flanking Shireen are her baking nemesis and her sometimes girlfriend, who is of Taiwanese descent.

In the author's words: "As a teen, I was put through the wringer of diet culture, which led to many years of fluctuating weight, self-doubt, and very serious self-esteem issues. ... Sadly, I suspect a lot of fat teens can relate to this experience and probably especially fat South Asian teens" (Jaigirdar, 2023, p. 322-323).

Intersectionality of characters: Race, body size, sexual orientation, immigrants

Synopsis: Shireen is the daughter of immigrant Bengali parents who run a donut shop in Dublin, Ireland. It's there that her dream to be a contestant on the *Junior Irish Baking Show* starts. She deals with mixed-messages from her parents about losing weight while making sure to eat enough. And despite being Irish, she endures racism as part of an immigrant family. In the end, she gets the right girl.

Language of description: "Fat" used 11 times but only 3 in the body of the book; the remainder in the dedication and author's note; "Plus-sized" (1 time) referencing clothes; "Chubby," "obese," "overweight," "large" (0).

Fat as primary theme (or not): Being fat is a tertiary theme. Racism is more pronounced in the story. The main themes are ambition and self-discovery.

Examples of size-related social oppression from the text:

On shopping for clothes:

- "... so many of the clothes they have for plus-sized people are just not flattering. It's like people make clothing for us that is supposed to cover us up, hide us" (Jaigirdar, 2023, p. 16-17).

On clothes and culture:

- "I've heard the comments my entire life. Why would a fat, dark-skinned girl like me wear such 'unflattering' clothes?" (Jaigirdar, 2023, p. 105).

Examples of self-acceptance from the text:

Showing confidence as she applies to TV baking competition show:

- "But I know there's no way I'll face crushing disappointment. There's nobody more qualified to be on the show" (Jaigirdar, 2023, p. 5).

Enjoying the feelings of attraction:

- "Even though this is something new, it's something familiar too. It's all the parts of a new relationship — the butterflies in our stomachs and the excitement — and the comfort of something that we've known before" (Jaigirdar, 2023, p. 314).

Title: *Her Good Side* (May 2023)

Author: Rebekah Weatherspoon

Cover: Artist Poppy Magda. An ombre illustration with turquoise to golden yellow as the background shows wide-hipped Bethany leaning on Asian boyfriend, Jacob.

In the author's words: "I've decided to stop having body positivity conversations with people who are attracted to fat people. Cause people will be 'inclusive' until they admit they wouldn't be caught dead holding hands with someone who isn't socially acceptable. Miss me with that shit" (Rebekah Weatherspoon Updates!, 2023).

Intersectionality of characters: Race, body size, sexual orientation

Synopsis: Bethany Greene is a "thick" Black teenager looking for the picture-perfect guy. Her hopes are dashed when the guy she's got a crush on rebuffs her invitation to the Homecoming dance. Bethany's best friend's boyfriend looks like a safe bet until he is all of the sudden single. Their plan to make everyone jealous backfires and Bethany now has herself that boyfriend.

Language of description: Fourteen words into the book comes the first description of body size: "Thick." It is not used again, replaced by "fat" (7 times). "Plus size" (2) refers to clothes and to describe a character's size. "Big" (2) to describe size; "overweight," "obese," "chubby," "large" (0).

Fat as primary theme (or not): Despite the first-sentence description of Bethany as being "thick," fatness is not much of a factor in the story. It is not mentioned again until Chapter 7, page 50. Looking for love, exploring sexual orientation and realizing professional dreams supersede matters of size.

Examples of size-related social oppression from the text:

As the protagonist tries to reconcile her love for cooking with her size:

- “I admit that I’m afraid to cook anything more complex at the house because I know how Mama T will react. And I explain that I know how it looks to people when you’re a fat person who enjoys food” (Weatherspoon, 2023, p. 221).

What she thinks about when getting a hug from a boy:

- “I’ll never, ever tell him this. But sometimes people don’t want to touch you when you’re fat. Like they’re afraid your fat is gonna rub off on them” (Weatherspoon, 2023, p. 182).

Examples of self-acceptance from the text:

Her confident declaration of her relationship with food:

- “I like food ‘cause good food tastes delicious. Did that cause me to gain weight? Sure did, but I’m pretty sure it didn’t turn me into a bad person” (Weatherspoon, 2023, p. 50).

Bethany at the Homecoming dance:

- “In the end, Jacob looks glamorous. I look like I was attacked by a four-year-old with crayons. It’s the best time I’ve had in a long time” (Weatherspoon, 2023, p. 187).

Title: *Out of Character* (February 2023)

Author: Jenna Miller

Cover: Artist Nicole Rifkin. Graphic illustration in mostly pink and blue hues, with elements of collage. Main character is depicted from above with a laptop resting on wide thighs and her bust pulling at the material of a T-shirt.

In the author’s words: “I wasn’t comfortable with my body when I was young, and I didn’t realize I was a lesbian until I was 30. Writing a main character who’s accepting of her size and sexuality was cathartic for me in many ways” (Blue, 2023).

Intersectionality of characters: Body size, sexual orientation, mental health

Synopsis: Cass is happy being fat and queer. Her obsession with an Internet roleplay community is a well-kept secret causing drama. She’s got more trouble than that though: her mother’s walked out and Cass is stressed in her relationship with a girl way cooler than she is. She finds her way back to family and friends with nary a pound shed.

Language of description: “Fat” (10 times) is the only word used to label people and describe body size (“fellow fat person,” “too fat,” “fat-girl costumes”). “Overweight,” “obese,” “plus size,” “large,” “chubby,” “heavy” (0).

Fat as primary theme (or not): Being fat partially shapes Cass’s worldview but the story is not swamped in details about this. Fatness is presented as one of her identities, two others being “nerdy” and gay. Mostly, the book deals with family trauma and the lies of an online addiction woven into the quest for real romantic love.

Examples of size-related social oppression from the text:

The judgment of society creeps into her head while on a date:

- “Being fat meant being judged for liking the same less-than-healthy foods as most people. It didn’t matter that I also liked healthier foods — eating a doughnut or slice of pizza meant I was unhealthy and lazy to the average nonfat onlooker, which was really messed up” (Miller, 2023, p. 146).

Explaining to her girlfriend how she thought her size, not her ability, was why she quit figure skating:

- “... My mom was always dieting despite being thinner, and her comments about herself really messed with how I viewed myself” (Miller, 2023, p. 158).

Examples of self-acceptance from the text:

After an emotionally exhausting conversation about family and school drama:

- “... this had been the best day I’d had in a really long time, and I was with one of my favorite people. I grinned back at her. No matter what came next, I was all in. ‘I’m ready’ ” (Miller, 2023, p. 155).

Cass’s declaration of self-worth while on a date, eating doughnuts:

- “No matter what anyone else thought about me, I refused to be someone who hated myself for being who I was or how I looked. Period” (Miller, 2023, p. 146).

Title: *Then Everything Happens at Once* (January 2023)

Author: M-E Girard

Cover: Artist Adams Carvalho. The main character’s love interests, a queer girl and a Black teen, lean up against an electric pink brick wall. The fat protagonist is in the center foreground, her red hair falling around a full face.

In the author’s words: “Author. Reader. Gamer. Queer person. Canadian. ICU nurse. Feminist. Fat person” (Girard, n.d.).

Intersectionality of characters: Race, gender identity, sexual orientation, body size, disability

Synopsis: Baylee is outwardly confident but her thoughts reveal self-doubt because of her size and omnipresent societal judgment. The story takes her on a journey for first love and she actually finds two of them, which creates almost as much drama as the way she feels about herself.

Language of description: “Fat” (50 times) is used pervasively to label people and refer to body size; both adjective and noun (“your fat,” “fat roll,” “fat girl/s” [17 times], “my fat,” “I’m fat”); “Overweight,” “obese,” “chubby,” “plus size,” “heavy,” “thick,” “large” not used at all.

Fat as primary theme (or not): Internalized fatphobia imbues the story; it is a major theme. But the author allows her protagonist to have and act on coming-of-age sexual feelings, even with the self-doubt.

Examples of size-related social oppression from the text:

Baylee’s thoughts as she checks out the cute boy next door:

- “Have I met a guy or girl — or *anyone* — in real life who would look at a fat girl like me and think she’s worth looking at? Not yet. Not ever, maybe” (Girard, 2023, p. 2).

The internalized fatphobia surfaces while she’s out with a group of friends:

- “Girls like me worry about fitting into the booth at the restaurant, we worry about rickety folding chairs giving out on us, we worry about being wider and taller than all the boys—than all the people, really” (Girard, 2023, p. 203).

Examples of self-acceptance from the text:

After a sexual encounter with that cute boy next door:

- “There are vibrations running through my body for hours after I leave Freddie, and for those few hours, I know I deserve to feel like this. I am allowed” (Girard, 2023, p. 308).

On being satisfied with her casual “friends with benefits” relationship:

- “The truth is, right now, I’m self-centered, a little selfish, and a little too concerned with doing what I want, when I want ... For now, though, the only love story I can handle is the one with myself” (Girard, 2023, p. 415).

Findings

The five books in this content analysis show via the covers that the protagonists are fat, and that intersectionality is woven into the stories. The covers for *The Fall of Whit Rivera* and *Her Good Side* pair the protagonist with a slim male of another race. The cover of *The Dos and Donuts of Love* shows the Irish-Bengali protagonist holding a plate of doughnuts. There’s an air of celebration in defiance of the stigmatizing notion that fat people shouldn’t enjoy the very thing that society (and often the medical profession) says makes them fat: food. Graphic and grittier illustrations are used for *Out of Character* and *Then Everything Happens at Once*. The large-busted protagonist of *Out of Character* is shown from above working on a computer. The fat main character of *Then Everything Happens at Once* is portrayed literally between the objects of her desire: the slim boy next door (a different race than her) on one side and the queer girl on the other.

A common thread in the stories is that no one is on a diet and yet they still get the happy ending. There may be talk about losing weight, usually from parents, but there is no effort by the protagonists to do this. The word “diet” was used eight times collectively in all books, and not always referring to eating, such as “I don’t understand Hindi the way my parents do, thanks to their steady *diet* of Bollywood movies ...” (Jaigirdar, 2023, p. 228). The word “calories” shows up just three times collectively. For readers wondering how fat is fat, the authors don’t stipulate. The weight of their protagonists is unknown. In *The Fall of Whit Rivera*, the mention of shopping for a size-14 bathing suit (Maldonado, 2023, p. 60) is the sole instance in the five books where body size is indicated. Leaving out weight allows fat readers to see themselves in the fatphobic experiences commonly faced at restaurants, doctor’s offices and even in their own homes. The number on the scale is irrelevant and could be alienating if the reader weighs more than the protagonist.

The suggestion of weight loss was always couched as a caring push by parents so that their fat child could be happy. This is yet another reminder of the fatphobic idea that fat people can’t be happy. The protagonists shun the diet merry-go-round, standing up to parents or just ignoring them. In four of the five books, *Then Everything Happens at Once* being the exception, the stories focus on so many other life events that the reader can easily forget the protagonist is fat. In *Her Good Side*, fat references are relegated to the far background. Internalized fatphobia is such a strong force for the main character in *Then Everything Happens at Once* that the reader is constantly reminded of her size.

Because of overlapping systems of oppression woven into the plots, other social stigmas are addressed, mostly having to do with race and sexual orientation. The characters are affected by judgment and stereotyping but not paralyzed by them. Four of the books depict same-sex relationships and there are no negative reactions from family or friends.

Conclusion

As a fat adult (really a senior citizen at 67-years-old) who was a fat child, teenager and young adult, I was surprisingly triggered by the books studied. During a lifetime of diets, disapproving looks and comments, weight stigma from doctors, and the microaggressions of furniture and airplane seatbelts that don't work for my big body, I would never have thought to ask the questions Machado poses in her article about the "power and danger of women who take up space" (2017). "Do you deserve to be treated like a person?" is one. But in these books, fatness is not mutually exclusive of deserving. It is framed as a body type rather than personality defect. The fat protagonists struggle with the same things I have for decades: Clothes that make young fat girls look matronly; stadium seats that pinch; negative responses to the enjoyment of food or cooking, and pressure to lose weight from family and media. I wish when I was 15 in 1972 that I could have read books in which fat girls experience and recognize weight stigma but aren't consumed by them. And that they even know they are stigmatized.

Though YA romance novels with fat protagonists were just a fraction of the YA books published in 2023, the ways characters are portrayed signal change. The protagonists are visible; they understand how fatphobia affects them; they have friends; they have interesting hobbies and goals; they are desired by love interests and enjoy the excitement that brings. Most importantly, not one of them has to lose weight to be happy.

This paper marks an early stepping stone in the study of how fat teens are represented in YA literature. Scholars who study the portrayals of Black and LGBTQ teens have left a rich trail to follow but there needs to be more research specifically about the depiction of fat teens in contemporary fiction. Continued research can also assess if the increase of fat teen representation by diverse writers is simply a trend or will evolve further.

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