

## Muffin Tops, Fat Rolls, and Self Love: Using Fat Young Adult Texts to Promote Body Positivity

Body positivity research has shown an upward trend in girls not only accepting their bodies but loving their bodies. In their 2010 Ohio State University study, “But I Like My Body”: Positive body image characteristics and a holistic model for young-adult women, Wood-Barcalow, Tylka, and Augustus-Horvath questioned fifteen body positive women about what body positivity truly meant. They concluded body positivity is an “overarching love and respect for the body” that encourages acceptance, appreciation, mindfulness, and understanding (112). Pairing Wood-Barcalow et al’s findings with current young adult literature titles reveals more and more “fat” characters shedding the “passive, depressive” plucky sidekick role and the depiction as “oafish, as villains, or, [...] problematically, as characters who have to overcome their weight in order to be seen as worthwhile or able to achieve their dreams,” but rather, they are taking on leading roles embracing their bodies and promoting body positive messages (Neary, Jensen). Applying Wood-Barcalow et al’s “Holistic Body Image Model” – Appreciation, Unconditional acceptance from others, Body acceptance and love, Spiritual/religion, Finding other who are accepting of themselves, Take care of the body via healthy behaviors, Filtering information in a body-protective manner, Inner positivity influencing outer demeanor, and Broadly conceptualizing beauty – as the theoretical framework to close readings of Julie Murphy’s *Puddin’*, Amy Spalding’s *The Summer of Jordi Perez*, Maggie Ann Martin’s *To Be Honest*, Kelly DeVos’ *Fat Girl on a Plane*, and Allen Zadoff’s *Food, Girls, and Other Things I Can’t Have*, this paper reveals how young adult literature is not only promoting body positivity but shifting ideals and perspectives of “fat” characters.