

## The Fictions of Being Fat and Female in YA Literature

Fat women in fiction are often the friend, the sidekick, the comic relief, even the villain (Younger, 2006; Jenson, 2015; Parsons, 2016; Machado, 2017). This critical content analysis examines the representation of fat female bodies within and across four contemporary Young Adult print and graphic texts: *Gabi, A Girl in Pieces* (Quintero, 2014), *Dumplin'* (Murphy, 2015), *In Real Life* (Doctorow & Wang, 2015), and *This One Summer* (Tamaki & Tamaki, 2015). Guided by the theoretical frameworks of Critical Fat Studies, Feminist Criticism, and Reader Response Theory, this study uses the methods of critical comparative content analysis (Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2017; Sulzer, Thein, & Schmidt, 2018) to explore the tension between print and graphic texts in constructions of fat female bodies. While the female protagonists in the texts under analysis demonstrate agency and complexity and consistently talk back to harmful stereotypes and dehumanizing expectations of body and gender, findings from this study reveal that graphic novels provide readers interpretative opportunities not afforded within print texts, giving readers the ability to evoke more varied and complex understandings of body.