



The Representation of Body Image and Self-Acceptance of The Main Character in *45 Pounds (More or Less)* By K.A Barson

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ABSTRACT

This research is an analysis of the representation of body image and self-acceptance issues of the main character in *45 Pounds (More or Less)* through the perspective of Hall's representation theory. By applying Hall's theory of representation to this research, the researcher gains a deeper understanding of how the novel represents and reinforces cultural norms and values related to body image and self-acceptance, and how these representations shape the feelings and emotions of readers related to the discourse of body image and self-acceptance. This study uses a qualitative research method in which the data sources are primary and secondary data. The primary data are in the form of narrations, dialogues and statements in the novel by K.A Barson entitled *45 Pounds (More or Less)* as the main focus in this research. The secondary data includes the historical data, psychological research and cultural studies on body image and self-acceptance. This research focuses on the representation of body image and self-acceptance issue and the critical position of the author through the sense or content in *45 Pounds (More or Less)*. The analysis results shows that these issues were predominantly influenced by the media's portrayal of unrealistic beauty standards, leading characters to constantly compare themselves and feel dissatisfied. The author prioritized health over vanity and encouraged readers to look beyond societal pressures, promoting a deeper appreciation of one's body and self-worth.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of body image has evolved over time and has been influenced by various historical and cultural factors. In ancient societies, for example, a fuller figure was often considered a symbol of wealth, health, and fertility (Swami, 2015). In contrast, in more recent times, there has been a growing emphasis on thinness, particularly in Western cultures, as a sign of beauty and success. This has led to an increase in body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, and other related mental health issues. Throughout history, body image and societal expectations have played a significant role in shaping how individuals perceive and value their bodies (Swami, 2015). Beauty standards have often been used as a means of social control, with the ideal body type serving as a marker of social status and power. This can contribute to negative attitudes towards certain bodies and can perpetuate discrimination and marginalization of certain groups.

The influence of media creates new meaning in society by shaping the way people think, feel, and behave. Media messages about body image and beauty ideals can lead to the development of new societal norms and values around it. The repeated exposure to these messages can influence how people perceive their bodies and lead to a desire to conform to these body image standards (Halliwell et al., 2005). This can result in a lack of self-esteem, poor body image, and even the development of eating disorders (Sepúlveda and Calado, 2012). These unrealistic beauty standards and messages also have the potential to be harmful to both physical and mental health (Halliwell et al., 2005).

In recent years, there has been a growing movement towards body positivity, which seeks to challenge these harmful societal attitudes towards different body types and promote acceptance of all bodies (Bridgers, 2016). This movement has gained traction across different cultures and has influenced a shift towards a more inclusive and diverse representation of bodies in the media and in popular culture. However, there is still a long way to go in promoting self-acceptance and combatting the damaging effects of societal body image standards. In this matter, *45 Pounds (More or Less)* by K.A Barson depicts the representation of body image and self acceptance through the struggle of a character named Ann who tries to get slimmer just to be accepted by the society.

The researchers took some previous researches as references to this research. We took some previous researches from other researchers who wrote the same topic or who applied the same theory as we do. The first previous research was written by Belinda (2019). It explained in Belinda's research that at the beginning of the story, the main female character wanted to change her body size by doing extreme ways in order to be accepted in her social life and to get a soulmate, but at the end of the story she accepted her being and happy with her body. This research conducted by us. research written by Fajriah (2016) also applied the theory of representation by Stuart Hall and gender as a social structure by Risman to explain how the novel represented the gender discrimination experienced by the three female main characters. The conclusion of her research was that Afghan women experienced the worst position under The Taliban regime. Another research by Hanifa (2016) also applied the theory of representation by Stuart Hall in the discursive method to find the beauty discourse and the ideologies of the novel. She also applied encoding in which the process of meaningful discourse was produced and constructed to find the discourse of beauty in the novel of Ugly Series and the ideological interest in it.

The main research gap between my research and these previous researches was in the data sources. My research elaborated on how the body image issue with its relation to

the main character's self-acceptance was discussed through the life struggle of the main character of *45 Pounds* novel, Ann, to make society became more aware of this issue.

Theoretical Framework

This research use the theory of representation by Stuart Hall to analyze the data because representation connected meaning and language to culture. According to Hall (1997), representation serves as the link connecting language and meaning with culture. It plays a fundamental role in the generation and transmission of meaning among individuals within a cultural context. This process include the utilization of language, signs, and visual elements to symbolize or depict various concepts and objects. (Hall, 1997)

Representation is a process to connect meaning and language to the culture. Meaning does exist because it is produced and shared. Hall contends that culture revolves around the notion of 'collective significance.' Culture encompasses the activities of attributing significance. There are two systems of representation that give us possibility to understand meaning. They are mental representation and language representation.

According to Hall (1997), mental representation refers to the collection of ideas and concepts that we store within our minds. These mental constructs are indispensable for our ability to make sense of the world. Essentially, meaning is intricately linked to the network of concepts and mental images that we develop in our minds. These mental representations act as symbols or "representatives" of the world, allowing us to relate to both internal and external aspects, thereby facilitating meaningful interpretation. Mental representation is a set of concept and idea in our head. When we see an object, then we have some idea or thought in mind related to the object, this conceptual map happens in our head is mental representation. This means that in order to understand things meaningfully we need to form any idea or concept in our head. The second is language representation. Interpreting the meaning of something is impossible to be done without language. We need language as a tool to communicate and to deliver ideas. Constructing meaning about stuff is part of the process to share the synchronized concept into the same language. It is easy to relate our ideas in certain form of words, images, or spoken sounds when we use the same language. The ideas we carry around in the form of words, images, and spoken words which contain meaning is called as signs. These signs create system of our culture. In short, system representation is the process of exchanging meaning.

Furthermore, Hall (1997: 15) divides representation into three forms; (1) Reflective Representations, (2) Intentional Representations, and (3) Constructionist Representations. Reflective representation is language or various symbols that reflect meaning. Intentional representation is how language or symbols embody the personal purpose of the speaker. While the constructionist representation is how meaning is reconstructed 'in' and 'through' language.

According to Hall (1997), there are, in general terms, three main approaches for explain how language functions as a means of representing meaning. These can be categorized as the reflective, intentional, and constructionist, or constructivist approaches. Reflective representation explains that language is like a mirror, to reflect or deliver the true meaning as it is already existed in the real world. It means that language represents the object, idea, people or even in the real world. The second is intentional approach. In intentional approach, language is used to express what the speaker, wants to deliver in their own way. The third approach is constructionist approach. In constructionist approach, meaning is constructed and produced by author using conceptual system of culture and

representational system. It means that the culture and society around help author to construct the idea.

Constructivists, as explained by Hall (1997), acknowledge the presence of the physical world, but they propose that meaning is not conveyed by this material reality. Instead, it is the language system or the relevant system employed to express our concepts that serves as the conveyer of meaning. In this view, meaning is constructed by social individuals who utilize the conceptual frameworks of their culture, along with linguistic and other representational systems, to give significance to the world. They use these systems to make the world meaningful and to communicate about it in a meaningful manner with others. This means that the actors are the ones who construct meaning then spread it all over the world by language. Individuals, items, and occurrences, these entities embody connotations and principles that necessitate interpretation by others. Culture generates significance or a feeling of distinctiveness among diverse factions within a community, and these factions exchange connotations via social engagements. They employ language as the medium for generating and absorbing meanings among themselves. These meanings emerge from the procedure of 'encoding' the cognitive framework within the mind, facilitated by a system referred to as 'signs'.

In his 2006 article entitled *Reconstruction Work: Depictions of Black Settlement after the War*, Hall also examines inquiries regarding historical recollection and visual representation in connection with photography as a colonial tool. Hall discusses the concept of '*circuit culture*,' which refers to the continuous cycle of how culture is controlled within a society through the medium of language. He suggests that this operates as a system of representation. Hall defines representation as a mechanism in which language utilizes '*signs*' and '*symbols*' to signify or depict concepts, ideas, thoughts, emotions, and expressions. It's worth noting that this term of representation of an idea represents itself in more than just verbal or written communication. Representation is also used in the use of photographic images which are often perceived as more objective than other representations, which is dangerous. In his view, individuals must critically examine who produced these images, what purpose they serve, and how they further their agenda

2. METHODS

This research uses qualitative research, the reason of choosing this method is because this research focuses on descriptive data or image and non-numeric data. The data of this research are obtained from the novel, references, journals, and other resources related to the topic of this research. This research uses the data from the quotations taken from the novel *45 Pounds (More or Less)* by K.A Barson which was written in 2013 and published by Penguin Young Readers Group as the source of data. Data for this research are textual data in form of passages taken from *45 Pounds (More or Less)* novel and is presented in the form of quotations. These quotations are examined through the lens of Stuart Hall's theory of representation to explore the influence of mental imagery on the body image issue of the main character of the novel, Ann.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Body Image Issue and self-acceptance

The cause of body image issue found on the novel based are effects of media, media plays a pivotal role in shaping Ann's body image perceptions. Unrealistic beauty standards presented through advertisements, TV shows, and other forms of media. The media

intentionally create an idealized image of what is considered attractive or desirable to attract people to buy their products. According to Hall (1997) in intentional approach, language is used to express what the speaker, writer or painter wants to deliver in their own way for their own purpose, in this context the media shown images, messages that can be interpreted and shares a message or meaning that there is some kind of body ideals. Ann as the one being researched are exposed to images and messages that emphasize a particular body type as the epitome of beauty sent by the media. This exposure can lead to social comparison, where Ann assesses herself against these unattainable standards, often feeling dissatisfied with their own appearances.

Causes of Body Image Issue

Researcher identified two significant causes of body image issues in the novel; media and social pressure. The novel portrays how media plays a pivotal role in shaping Ann's body image perceptions. Social pressure, both in the form of direct interactions and perceived societal norms, also affects Ann's body image issues. This occurs when people on Ann's life compares themselves to individuals around them, especially Ann who they perceive as less attractive or in worse shape than them. Additionally, Ann's comparison onto others in her life can be seen as a reflection of her own self-doubt. She might assume that others are judging her appearance, leading her to perceives others as more attractive. According to Kusumaningtyas (2019) people with body image issues tend to perceive their body as unattractive.

a) Media

The media is one of the things that cause the emergence of body image (Levine, 2012), which then influences how a person feels, thinks, perceives, and treats themselves. However, besides that, social media can also create positive and negative body images. Building and developing a positive body image makes a person more confident and grateful, so they can accept whatever state their body is in, in Ann's case the media contribute towards her feeling unhappy about her body image in which makes her feel worse.

Media sometimes distort body images ideals by setting an "ideal body type" or commonly referred as "body goals". The media, including advertisements, often portray idealized and often unrealistic standards of beauty and success. This can contribute to distorting individuals' perceptions of themselves and lead to comparison based on the mental representation that built up upon the wather's mind.

"Who knows, but still I can't help fantasizing about this program. About it working. If so, in three measly months-by the end of summer- I could look like Natalie S's *after* picture. Thin. Confident. Happy" (Barson, 2013:20).

According to Leonard (2020) Media evoke negative feelings towards womans bodies as a result of body challenges that often using certain body references posted as a "body goals". Ann's thoughts reveal a clear influence of media, specifically advertising, on her self-perception of certain body image ideals as a mental representation. The quotation above suggests that Ann's contemplation is affected by exposure to media content, an infomercial or advertisement showcasing Natalie S' transformation. In this case, the portrayal of how thin and confident. According to Rosida (2019) some body simage ideals determined only by certain criteria such as

having a thin body, white skin, flawless and addressed to women only. Natalie S. image built a mental representation on Ann's mind and led her to idealize Natalie's transformation as something to attain for herself. The media's focus on dramatic changes within a short timeframe contributes to Ann's potentially unrealistic expectations.

"And what does that eighty bucks buy?" she sounds so skeptical. I understand. She hasn't seen the whole infomercial. If she had seen the before and after pics of Natalie S and the tears as she told her story, she'd be on board" (Barson, 2013:22)..

The quotation above shows that Ann's already accepted the portrayal of Natalie S in the advertisement as her mental representation of body ideals. This lead Ann to feel dissatisfied with her own body image and motivated to pursue a similar transformation.

b) Social Pressure

"Social pressure refers to the influence exerted by the social environment, including individuals, groups, and societal norms, on an individual's thoughts, behaviors, decisions, and attitudes" (McClendon, 2018). It rises the expectations, judgments, and standards that others or society as a whole impose. Social pressure towards Ann comes from the people around her, especially someone close to her like her mother and her friends.

"She whispers, "With a little effort, you could be in this suit in no time. If you want, I'll get it for you. As incentive" (Barson, 2013:4).

This quotation shows Ann's mother's words carry a subtle form of social pressure as she softly suggests that Ann could "easily" fit into the suit with just a bit of effort, and she offers to buy Ann the suit as an incentive. This shows that she expects that Ann should go on diet to match the suit's size, creating an implicit pressure to conform to a certain appearance and potentially cause body dissatisfaction. The notion that Ann needs to show some effort and be provided with an incentive implies that her current state is not satisfactory in her perspective, indirectly reinforcing the idea that her body is not on what she thinks it should be.

Later on in the story, Naomi which seems to overhead their conversation greets them and after having some conversation leave while giving a subtle comment about Ann's body images.

"Come in with me, Amber." Naomi steps into the stall but maintains eye contact with me. "Help me find something that doesn't make my thighs look huge" (Barson, 2013:6).

As Naomi leaves Ann into the stall, she maintains eye contact, which emphasize that her words are being projected towards Ann. When Naomi expresses her desire to find something that doesn't emphasize her thighs looking "huge," she indirectly sends a message to Ann about body standards and appearance by indirectly calling her huge. Naomi's comment put pressure on Ann, her words suggest that there is an expectation to be critical of one's body and to goes for a certain appearance. Naomi's focus on body size and her assumption that smaller is better can contribute

to Ann feeling the need to conform to these standards as well. According to Ganesan (2018) social pressure to be thin are affecting college going girls, which resulted in unhealthy diets and stress.

Body Image Issue

This research found that body images issues found in the novels are body dissatisfaction, eating disorder, low self-esteem, depression and anxiety and unhealthy workout/diet. This appears as a result of how the body images represented in the media using intentional approach to send message and perceive “body ideals” already sets as a mental representation on the character’s mind. These findings goes in line with the result of a research by Pakki (2018) which found that body image has implications on mental health such as self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and eating disorders.

a) Body Dissatisfaction

Body dissatisfaction refers to a negative perception and dissatisfaction with one's own body and physical appearance (Holmqvist, 2010). There are several occasion within the story, where Ann shows that she is not feeling happy with her body size.

“I push away all the thoughts of bathing suits and dresses and judgmental looks. All thoughts of being trapped in dressing rooms and dresses and flabby bodies. All thoughts of frustration and embarrassment and self-loathing” (Barson 2013: 13).

Weight comparisons to both peer and model targets were primary correlates of body dissatisfaction (Jones, 2001). Weight comparison is a significant manifestation of body dissatisfaction and often involves individuals comparing their own body weight to that of others, societal standards, or perceived ideals. This quotation takes place following a distressing moment when Ann, unable to fit into a swimsuit, the reality of her body size put her into a stressful mood. The mention of "flabby bodies" hints at Ann's harsh self-criticism and her tendency to compare herself unfavorably to an idealized standard which is one big sign of body dissatisfaction as result of how “ideals thin body” represented by the media serves as mental representation. According to Siswoaribowo (2020) media are responsible in accentuating the physical beauty with a slim body, brighter and drive adolescents to body dissatisfaction.

b) Eating Disorders

Eating disorder is a serious mental health condition characterized by disturbed eating habits, negative body image, and often an intense preoccupation with weight and appearance (Fairburn, 1993). Individuals with eating disorders may engage in extreme behaviors related to food and eating that can have detrimental effects on their physical and emotional well-being.

“When I’m done, I eat the cheesecake. I don’t know why. I’m still stuffed, and it doesn’t even taste that great. As I shovel forkful after forkful into my mouth, I think about Natalie S. I can’t help but wonder if I’ve missed out the first step to the rest of my life.” (Barson, 2013:25)

Ann's decision to eat cheesecake despite feeling full and not finding it particularly enjoyable shows emotional eating or a lack of control over her eating habits. The act of "shoveling forkful after forkful" into her mouth implies a compulsive and impulsive behavior surrounding food consumption. In this case Ann showing some signs related to Binge Eating Disorder or B.E.D. Binge eating disorder commonly appears among people with obesity (Dingemans, 2002).

c) Low Self-Esteem

Low self-esteem refers to a negative and often distorted perception of oneself, where individuals consistently view themselves as unfavorable (Fennell, 2009). People with low self-esteem may have a diminished sense of self-worth, lack confidence in their abilities, and harbor self-doubt.

"I stare at her. Is she crazy? That's not going to fit me. And even if Keehn's did have my size, it would be a crime against humanity so show that much flab in public. Judging by the look on the practically concave saleswoman's face-the one who scanned me up and down and is now comparing my measurement to the orang band-aids with strings my mom is holding- I am not the only one who thinks this." (Barson, 2013:2)

Ann's thought process then drawn into a self-critical spiral, where she goes on to thinking that even if such clothing were available in her size, wearing it would be a "crime against humanity." This harsh judgment directed at herself highlights the extent of her negative self-perception, as she equates her body with something that should be hidden away or concealed. She also thinks that she is not the only one agreed on her thoughts.

Ann, who has lost motivation and is no longer enthusiastic about getting through the day, refuses to go shopping because she feels that she does not deserve to wear any dress.

"I just don't want to go to shopping." I keep loading the dishwasher, so I don't have to look at her. "what do you mean?" she asks. "I don't know." I'm struck with self-consciousness. How can I tell her that I want to go on another diet? That I need to lose weight before the wedding. Any idiot can see that if you don't want to be fat, you shouldn't eat so much, you should move more. Any idiot could see that. Any idiot is smarter than me (Barson, 2013:52).

From the quotation above, it shows how social pressure keeps making Ann feel uncomfortable with herself. The words "That I need to lose weight before the wedding" show feelings of inferiority created by low self-esteem or a sense of self-esteem. Insecure people, the main character, have difficulty seeing the positive values they have. On the contrary, she sees herself as someone with many weaknesses. Such conditions are undoubtedly detrimental. People's criticism of her makes her feel like a failure in having an ideal life. This unsupportive environment makes the main character continue to blame herself and refuse to try to love herself as she is.

According to Della (2021), body image and self-esteem has a direct effect relationship. Ann frequently feels uncomfortable with herself because she compares herself to others. Social media, popular culture, and socially accepted beauty

standards can create pressure to conform to or emulate "ideal" images. Ann is afraid that she will experience traumatic or negative experiences in the future, such as harassment, bullying, or rejection, which could damage their self-esteem. Ann feels insecure or worthless because of these experiences. Pressure from social norms or expectations from family, friends, or society, in general, can make a person feel bad about themselves if they do not live up to those standards or expectations. Excessive self-criticism, feelings of unworthiness, or perfectionism can cause a person to feel bad about themselves. Ann increasingly feels focused on her weaknesses and ignores positive qualities that she has.

d) Depression and Anxiety

Depression and anxiety are two common and often interconnected mental health conditions that can significantly impact a person's well-being and daily life. Depression, characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a lack of interest or pleasure in activities, can lead to a pervasive sense of emotional and physical exhaustion (Wakefield, 2015). Individuals with depression may experience changes in sleep and appetite, difficulty concentrating, and a sense of worthlessness. Depression can affect motivation, making even simple tasks feel overwhelming.

People with depression may be more prone to compare themselves, as their negative self-view can lead them to focus on their perceived inadequacies when comparing themselves to seemingly more successful individuals. This can intensify feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness, which are hallmark symptoms of depression. Experiencing others' negative judgments or perceptions can reinforce their own negative self-views and deepen their sense of isolation or unworthiness.

I tell her everything. About the bikini and the incentive and the huge striped suit. About seeing Naomi and what mom said. She listens but doesn't take sides. She does speak her mind about the bathing suit, though. "Why don't you buy that suit yourself? Who cares if your mom likes it? She's not the one wearing it." I wish I didn't care, but I couldn't put that suit on without hearing my mother's disgust that I am a size seventeen. I'd rather spend my money losing weight so I can buy a smaller, worthy-of-keeping-the-size-tag-intact-suit. (Barson, 2013:25)

In the quotation above, Ann, who tells the story, shows the pressure side of herself towards other people's judgments. From the quote above, it can be seen that Ann still cares a lot about what other people think about the clothes she will wear herself. She feels that she needs input and opinions from other people in order to determine her direction. Ann's way of thinking shows that Ann is afraid of people's negative comments if she wears something that does not suit her. This fear can be seen in the quote "I couldn't put that suit on without hearing my mother's disgust that I am a size seventeen". Social pressures related to physical appearance can often cause body image problems. The people around the main character feel dissatisfied with the main character's appearance and make themselves experience eating disorders, low self-esteem, and social anxiety.

Ann's routine to get the ideal body weight sometimes makes her tired and stressed. This can be seen in the following quotation:

...
 “I can’t face her. She does not understand. She’s never been fat. She’s never struggled with self-control. She’s never been out of control. Not a day in her life. I can’t talk to her about this. Slimmer You says, “Picture yourself thin to ward away cravings.” I close my eyes and picture it. Then I picture ice cream. I still want it. And I hate myself for it”. (Barson, 2013:132)

The quote above shows the main character's struggle to change her lifestyle. As someone on a diet program, of course, the main character must maintain her diet and avoid all foods that can make her fat again. However, the diet journey will not always run smoothly. Preoccupation with and anxiety about impure or unhealthy food, and with the effect of its quality and composition on physical and emotional health as can be seen in the words “Then I picture ice cream. I still want it. And I hate myself for it”. These words show an unhealthy relationship with food, including unhealthy eating patterns, uncontrolled eating behaviors, or an unhealthy emotional relationship with food. Although there is nothing wrong with watching food intake, the main character is fixated on the rules of 'healthy eating' excessively. In the end, this can take a toll on the health and well-being of the main character. The main character who experienced the symptoms at first just wanted to start following a specific diet for health reasons. Over the time, this focus on healthy eating slowly develops into an obsession and ends with this disorder as a manifestation of stress and anxiety.

e) *Unhealthy Workouts and Diets*

In the nove, the first time Aunt Jackie and her girlfriend Chris, announced their marriage to their family, Ann felt happy, excited, and supportive. Moreover, Chris also directly asked Ann to be the bridesmaid for their Happy day. This good news however force Ann to set an unrealistic goal.

“More shopping! With mom in control of everything. Tomorrow. My gut flutters. Visions of the last time I tried on a dress flash through my mind. If I’m going to look good at Aunt Jackie’s wedding, I’ll need to lose forty-five pounds. By the middle of August.” (Barson, 2013:50)

The wedding news gives the main character a new burden because she has to be the bridesmaid at her aunt's wedding. She felt it was social pressure because she had to adapt her fat body to wear a beautiful dress when she became a bridesmaid. A social group influences social pressure to make someone change their attitudes, thoughts, or values. Through social pressure, the main character feels that a social group is trying to influence one person or several people so that they act or behave in a certain way and look according to their standards. This pressure has a negative effect because the main character tries as quickly as possible to lose weight without considering her health by saying “If I’m going to look good at Aunt Jackie’s wedding, I’ll need to lose forty-five pounds. By the middle of August.”

“I think I’m the only person in the world to gain half a pound after spending a night puking. Up. Down. Up. Down. It’s not a weight-loss roller coaster. Roller coasters are fun. So are yo-yos. This is not entertaining and not a game. This is torture. Like playing with a Red Ryder BB gun and actually shooting your eye

out. Even though I've lost fourteen pounds, I still have so far to go." (Barson, 2013:180)

The quotation shown above portrays the harmful consequences of an unhealthy and unsustainable approach to weight loss used by Ann. Ann's description of her experience - gaining weight despite a night of vomiting, the constant fluctuations, and her analogy to a roller coaster - underscores the physical and emotional toll of engaging in extreme dieting behaviors. The comparison to a "Red Ryder BB gun" and the reference to "shooting your eye out" shows the dangers of pursuing drastic weight loss methods.

The quotation also highlights the stark contrast between the perception of weight loss as a game and the painful reality of the ordeal. Ann's assertion that roller coasters and yo-yos are "fun" implies that such activities are meant to bring joy serves as an analogy of something that moves upside down referring to her weight gain-loss situation, but instead of fun her struggle with her weight feels like a form of torture. The usage of these analogies shows the distress she experiences while enduring and unsustainable diet.

Self-Acceptance

In the novel, it is found that self-acceptance is intertwined with the journey of accepting one's body image and understanding the diversity of body types. The protagonist, Ann, undergoes a transformative process where her path towards self-acceptance is paved by her growing appreciation of her body image and the realization that beauty comes in various forms. As Ann learns to accept her body, including its imperfections and differences from societal ideals, she begins to experience a newfound sense of self-worth. This shift in perspective allows her to break free from self-criticism and negative self-perception. These self-acceptances appear as the story goes on and the idea represented by the media of body images are slowly being driven away because of character's realization about their own issues that are perceived to be more important, and how their mental representation about health started to shift from the image built by the media.

a) Body Image Acceptance

Body image acceptance refers to the positive and healthy perception and evaluation of one's own body. It involves embracing and appreciating your body for its unique qualities, regardless of whether it aligns with societal standards or expectations (Bennett, 2021).

"I've always hated looking at pictures of me, still do, really. For some reason, they show fat even more clearly than a mirror does. I'm still not on my ideal weight. I didn't lose forty-five pounds before the wedding, who knows if I ever will. I've lost twenty-seven and a half pounds, and that's better than nothing. Somehow, though, today I'm thinking more about what I've gained than what I've lost". (Barson, 2013:264)

In this quotation, Ann talks openly about not liking how she looks in photos, and how she used to focus on her weight a lot. She wanted to lose 45 pounds before her wedding but only lost 27.5 pounds. Despite not reaching her goal, she feels happier. She starts to think more about the positive things she has gained from her

journey rather than just the lost weight. This condition that she starts to accept her body and herself more. Ann realizes that even though she has not reached her perfect weight, she has made progress and that is something to be proud of. She also gets to know her mom's struggles with weight, which helps her understand her own feelings better. This moment in the book shows how Ann is becoming more okay with how she looks and is finding happiness beyond just her weight showing her acceptance of body image.

b) Normalizing Body Types

Ann's positive perception of Chris' body, describing her as "a little on the pudgy side, like me," indicates that Ann sees beauty and worth beyond societal stereotypes of body size. By recognizing similarities in body type, Ann finds a sense of relatability and comfort, illustrating that she moves a step towards accepting her own body.

"I loved how she talked to me like a grown-up, not a little kid. How she was a librarian, so she'd not only read my favorite books but told me about others. And how she was a little on the pudgy side, like me" (Barson, 2013:43).

Ann's positive perception of Chris' body, describing her as "a little on the pudgy side, like me," indicates that Ann sees beauty and worth beyond societal stereotypes of body size. By recognizing similarities in body type, Ann finds a sense of relatability and comfort, illustrating that she moves a step towards accepting her own body.

"There's another picture of me, mom, and Libby eating cake. I have a mouthful, which is super embarrassing. But the part that I notice even more is mom. Her mouth is full, too, which is a rare sight, but she's watching me, not the camera, and her eyes are sparkling. She's smiling – a weird, mouth-full-of-cake smile, but a smile nonetheless. She looks proud. She's watching me like she's proud. (Barson, 2013:272)

The key element that portrays acceptance is how Ann interprets her mother's gaze and expression. Ann saw her mother's watchful and proud eyes fixed on her, not the camera. Despite the unconventional mouth-full-of-cake smile, Ann recognizes happiness are expressed from her mother's face, showing that now she accepted her body image, this also complimented by The fact that Ann's mother is focused on with a look that seems to indicate proudness, in a moment that might be considered less than perfect, speaks volumes about the unconditional love and acceptance within their relationship despite their own personal struggle with body images.

Author's Critical Position of Body Image and Self-acceptance Issue

K.A. Barson, also known as Kristin Bartley Lenz, is a Young Adult (YA) author who has explored themes related to body image and self-acceptance in her writing of *45 Pounds (More or Less)* novel. Through her writing, K.A. Barson critically examines societal pressures and expectations surrounding body image, particularly for young individuals. She addresses the emotional and psychological impact that these pressures can have on self-esteem and well-being. By depicting Ann's journey, Barson advocates the importance of self acceptance and finding self-worth beyond physical appearance.

In an interview with Barson by Jennifer M. Brown, titled “*Finding the Right Fit*” Barson revealed a few things about her stand in body image and self-acceptance issue.

Jennifer: “Ann’s mindset is so believable, have you worked with teens who struggle with body image and eating disorders? Have you grapped with this issues yourself?”

Barson: “All of the above, some of Ann’s internal thoughts are 100 percent me; I have to admit that. The feelings are real, and I still struggle with them. I homeschooled my children in cooperative and had classes that included my kids and their peers. Some of what is in the book came from them-not specific children, but bits of dialogue and the way which they thought out loud.”

In her response, K.A. Barson reveals a deep personal connection to the themes of body image and eating disorders portrayed in her work, *45 Pounds (More or Less)*. Jennifer's question specifically inquires about the authenticity of Ann's mindset and whether Barson has encountered similar struggles with teenagers dealing with these issues. Barson's answer reflects her direct involvement with and empathy for the challenges many teenagers face in relation to body image and eating disorders.

By admitting that "some of Ann's internal thoughts are 100 percent me," she highlights a level authenticity in her writing. This shows the genuine emotions and insights she brings to the character's journey, suggesting that the narrative is informed by her own personal battles with body image concerns and self-acceptance.

Jennifer: “What Ann picks up on are the subliminal messages that her mother sends out. Once she develops compassion for her mother, she recognizes that the woman was really directing these comments at herself.”

Barson: Ann's turmoil was internal.... She was viewing [her weight and her family life] through a lens that was skewed.

In her response, K.A. Barson elaborates on the dynamics of Ann's struggle with body image and her relationship with her mother. Jennifer's observation focuses on Ann's ability to perceive the subliminal messages her mother communicates, leading to a realization that these messages were directed more at herself than at Ann. By characterizing Ann's turmoil as "internal," Barson indicates that Ann's struggle with body image is not solely influenced by external factors but is significantly shaped by her own mindset and emotions.

Jennifer: “Ann needs to lose 45 pounds in order to conform to her "ideal weight" by the wedding. But it's not until her focus turns from counting calories to adopting a healthy lifestyle that she is able to make some progress.

Barson: “Those weight charts are kind of dangerous. Your "healthy" weight may vary. With my character, I wanted the focus to be on health rather than vanity.

Barson's comment about weight charts being "kind of dangerous" underscores her skepticism about the use of standardized weight benchmarks. She suggests that relying solely on these charts can lead to potentially harmful outcomes, perhaps causing individuals to fixate on numerical goals without considering the broader context of health and well-being.

Barson's emphasize the variability of a "healthy" weight shows that she challenges the notion of a universal ideal weight. In second part of her answer Barson shows her intention to prioritize health, she encourages readers to value themselves beyond mere physical appearance.

K.A. Barson's position on body image revolves around supporting self-acceptance, individuality, and closer approach to well-being. She critiques the use of standardized weight charts, considering them potentially harmful and showing the dangers of fixating solely on numbers. Barson focus her attention to the variability of a "healthy" weight, advocating for a more flexible understanding that factors in diverse influences on well-being. Her critical stance view that body image issues not solely influenced by external factors but is significantly shaped by individual's own mindset and emotions, therefore highlighting the psychological and emotional aspects that contribute to negative self-perception. Barson prioritizes health over vanity, aiming to shift the focus from superficial appearances to a comprehensive perspective on personal well-being. Through her work, Barson encourages readers to look beyond societal pressures, and advocate a deeper appreciation of one's body and individual worth.

4. CONCLUSION

This research found body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, eating disorder, depression, stress and anxiety, unhealthy diets and workout as issues related to body image in the novel *45 Pounds (More or Less)*, The cause of body image issue found on the novel based are effects of media, media plays a pivotal role in shaping Ann's body image perceptions. Unrealistic beauty standards presented through advertisements, TV shows, and other forms of media create an idealized image of what is considered attractive or desirable. In intentional approach, language is used to represent what the speaker, writer, or painter wants to convey in their own way for their own purposes, in this context the media has shown images, and messages that can be interpreted as expressing a message and meaning that there are some kind of body ideals that grows in the individuals mind to become a mental representation. We all have a set of ideas in our heads that we refer to as mental representations. Without them, we would be completely unable to effectively perceive the world. The system of ideas and images we create in our minds that can "represent" the world. Characters, including Ann, are exposed to images and messages that represent a particular body type as the epitome of beauty. This exposure can lead to comparison, where characters like Ann assess themselves against these unattainable standards, often feeling dissatisfied with their own appearances.

This research also found self-acceptance is intertwined with the journey of accepting one's body image and understanding the diversity of body types. The protagonist, Ann, undergoes a transformative process where her path towards self-acceptance is paved by her growing appreciation of her body image and the realization that beauty comes in various forms. As Ann learns to accept her body, including its imperfections and differences from societal ideals, she begins to experience a newfound sense of self-worth, breaking her free from negative self-perception.

The author, K.A. Barson's position on body image related issues revolves around promoting self-acceptance, individuality, and closer approach to well-being. She criticizes the use of standardized weight charts, considering them potentially harmful and showing the dangers of fixating solely on numbers. Barson focuses her attention on the variability of a "healthy" weight, advocating for a more flexible understanding that factors in diverse influences on well-being. Her critical stance is that external factors do not solely influence body image issues but are significantly shaped by an individual's mindset and emotions,

highlighting the psychological and emotional aspects that contribute to negative self-perception. According to Armitage (2012) self-affirmation reduces body dissatisfaction by basing self-esteem on domains other than body weight and shape. Barson prioritizes health over vanity, aiming to shift the focus from superficial appearances to a comprehensive perspective on personal well-being. Through her work, Barson encourages readers to look beyond societal pressures and advocate a deeper appreciation of one's body and individual worth.

The exploration reveals a range of issues, including body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, eating disorders, depression, stress, anxiety, and unhealthy behaviors such as diets and workouts. It is clear that media plays a pivotal role in shaping characters' perceptions of body image, with unrealistic beauty standards propagated through advertisements and TV shows contributing to the idealization of a specific body type.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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