# Body Positivity In The Main Female Character In *Sierra Burgess is a Loser* (2018) Film

**Rifa Afantia[a*], Moh. Supardi[a]**

[a]  English Literature, Faculty of Adab and Humanities,
    Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta

[*] Corresponding Author. Email: rifa.afantia17@mhs.uinjkt.ac.id

## Article Info

**Keywords:**
*Beauty Standard,*
*Body Image,*
*Body Positivity,*
*Feminism,*
*Positive Body Image*

## Abstract

This research aims to explore the characterization of Sierra as the main female character reflecting body positivity presented in the Sierra Burgess Is a Loser (2018) film directed by Ian Samuels. This research uses the descriptive qualitative method supported by the character and characterization theory by Joseph M. Boggs and Dennis W. Petrie and representation theory by Stuart Hall. This research also uses the concept of body positivity by Tracy and Wood Barcalow to support the analysis. In the Sierra Burgess Is a Loser film, Sierra represents intelligence, independence, and confidence as a teenage girl who reflects body positivity. She struggles to achieve her freedom as a plus body size woman. Becasue of her plus body size, Sierra experiences injustice and bullying as a fat girl in her school. Sierra reflects body positivity as she fights to gain her confidence and face her fear through the struggles of being a fat girl. Moreover, it shows that Sierra Burgess Is a Loser (2018) film tries to support the body positivity movement as the film portrays Sierra as an intelligent woman who breaks the stereotype of unrealistic body image and manages to embrace other women to have a body positivity image.

**Kata kunci:**
*Standar Kecantikan,
Citra tubuh,
body positivity,
Feminisme,
Citra Tubuh Positif*

**Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisa penokohan Sierra sebagai tokoh utama wanita yang mencerminkan *body positivity* dalam film Sierra Burgess Is a Loser (2018) yang disutradarai oleh Ian Samuels. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan teori karakter dan penokohan oleh Joseph M. Boggs dan Dennis W. Petrie serta teori representasi Stuart Hall. Penelitian ini juga menggunakan konsep *body positivity* dari Tracy dan Wood Barcalow untuk mendukung analisis. Dalam film Sierra Burgess Is a Loser, Sierra merepresentasikan kecerdasan, kemandirian, dan kepercayaan diri sebagai gadis remaja yang mencerminkan *body positivity*. Dia berjuang untuk mencapai kebebasannya sebagai wanita bertubuh besar. Karena ukuran tubuhnya yang besar, Sierra mengalami ketidakadilan dan perundungan sebagai gadis gendut di sekolahnya. Sierra mencerminkan kepositifan tubuh saat dia berjuang untuk mendapatkan kepercayaan dirinya dan menghadapi ketakutannya melalui perjuangan menjadi gadis gemuk. Selain itu, terlihat pula bahwa film *Sierra Burgess Is a Loser* (2018) mencoba untuk mendukung gerakan *body positivity* karena film tersebut menggambarkan Sierra sebagai wanita cerdas yang mendobrak *stereotype body image* yang tidak realistis dan berhasil merangkul wanita lain untuk memiliki *body positivity image*.

**الكلمات الرئيسية:**
معايير الجمال،
صورة الجسم،
إيجابية الجسم،
النسوية،
صورة الجسم الإيجابية

**ملخص**

يهدف البحث إلى تحليل توصيف سيرا بورجيس باعتبارها الشخصية الرئيسية الأنثوية التي تعكس إيجابية الجسم في فيلم «الفاشلة سيرا بورجيس (٢٠١٨) للمخرج إيان صامويلز، مستخدما المنهج الوصفي النوعي مع نظرية التشخيص لجوزيف .م. بوجز ودينيس بيتري ونظرية التمثيل لستيوارت هول، كما يستفيد من مفهوم إيجابية الجسم لـ وود بركلوا وتريسي تيلكا لدعم التحليل. وتمثل سيرا في مشاهد الفيلم عن الذكاء والاستقلالية والثقة بالنفس كفتاة مراهقة مما يعكس إيجابية الجسم، حيث أنها تكافح من أجل تحقيق حريتها واكتساب ثقعتا ومواجهة مخاوفها كامرأة ذات جسم كبير، وعانت من الظلم والتنمر بصفتها فتاة سمينة الجسم في المدرسة التي تدرس فيها. بالإضافة إلى أن الفيلم يحاول دعم حركة إيجابية الجسم وذلك لأنه يصور الشخصية الرئيسية على أنها امرأة ذكية تكسر الصور النمطية غير الواقعية للجسم وتنجح في احتضان النساء للحصول على صورة إيجابية للجسم.

**Introduction**

Women are way more vulnerable to body images interference than men (Makowski et al., 2015, p. 82). Society often sets an unrealistic standard as the 'ideal' for women over their physical beauty, such as smooth skin, hourglass body, full lips, and others. This unrealistic standard becomes vital as people see attractive people as more desirable than others according to their complexion (Dion et al., 1972, p. 288). The media also perpetuated this unrealistic standard as it transmitted and reinforced values and norms of this unrealistic beauty standard as 'ideal' for women. It makes women willing to do every possible way to change themselves and meet this unrealistic beauty standard, even though it will harm them. Historically, women have been controlled physically and cognitively by the standards constructed in a patriarchal society. Such as male dominance, gender inequality, and beauty standards; are some examples of the standards that occurred in a patriarchal society. Idealized images in beauty standards are noteworthy by which self-worth values women according to their bodies. According to Miller, scholars have found that physical attractiveness is important in shaping individual perception, and people who are attractive in physical appearance are evaluated more favorably in society (Miller, 1970, p. 241). This perception makes them more accessible and more successful in social interaction (Reis et al., 1980, pp. 614–615).

Over the years, the media continuously promoted idealized body images. Media often portray women with ideal bodies and beautiful faces as the main character in the story, depicted through advertisements, magazines, or films. As it has a vital role in transmitting idealized body image values, media often portray these attractive people as more desirable, credible, and inspirational (Solomon et al., 1992, p. 24). These images perpetuate the idealized body image through the size "size 0" models and celebrities who often invest in extreme measures by unhealthy diet and exercise, drugs, or plastic surgery to maintain a thin body shape and size. Furthermore, media often shows unrealistic images either by makeup or tools (Field, 2005, p. e217). Consequently, women tend to have negative self-evaluations, which are made through the social comparison process by these images. It often leads to low self-esteem, self-deprecation, and in extreme cases, even depression (Thompson & Stice, 2001, p. 181). Furthermore, Botta argued that this body dissatisfaction had become a serious concern. It has caused severe psychological problems such as low self-esteem, social anxiety, depression, and eating disorders (Botta, 2000, p. 147).

As a response, feminists have long protested these inequalities to challenge these unrealistic standards. In media cultures, feminists protest women's objectification and the exclusionary nature of Western beauty ideals (Darwin & Miller, 2020, p. 1). Since the 20th century, feminists have used new digital technologies to express their opposition to these idealized beauty standards, maintaining a collective known as the "Body Positive Movement." Sastre argued that this movement is entirely abroad, encompassing various networks and campaigns across numerous cultural arenas, not all of which are in direct dialogue with one another (Sastre, 2014, p. 929). In addition, Body Positive activists often use online platforms to discuss their varied issues with beauty culture. Body positivity firstly emerged with the Victorian Dress Reform movement in 1851. This movement proposed that women should accept their bodies and opposed hourglass body standards by demoralized women using corsets. In the 1960s, a movement appeared in order to end fat-shaming. This movement proposed fighting against fat-shaming and protesting discrimination against the fat, as fat people often correlated as being unhealthy. In the 2000s, this movement blossomed and focused on challenging unrealistic feminine beauty standards, including body size. Sartre argued that the body positivity movement stresses

inclusivity. Its related websites showcase bodies of all shapes and sizes as it occurs against mainstream media images of idealized female bodies (Sastre, 2014, p. 930). Therefore, body positivity aims to change unrealistic feminine beauty standards socially constructed by changing perception of size, weight, and appearance and accepting all body shapes and sizes among the diverse characteristics.

One of the films concerned about idealized body images is the *Sierra Burgess Is a Loser* film. It is a romantic comedy about American teens released and presented by *Netflix* in 2018. This film hires Ian Samuels as the director and Lindsey Beer as the writer in *Black Label Media* production. This film was cast by Shannon Purser, as the main female character, who is known for having plus size body with blond hair. Shannon, who plays the role of Sierra Burgess in this film, is falling in love with a guy named Jamey, who unknowingly contacts her phone number while he wants to contact Veronica, known as the prettiest girl in the film school. As the love grows and the connection bonds, Sierra tells Jamey the truth about herself. She tries to reconcile and accept her body as she has an unideal body than any other girls in her school including Veronica. She used to be bullied by her friends in school, which made her insecure about her appearance. Scholars found that in the United States, 19% of elementary students are victims of bullying (Dake et al., 2003, p. 173).

Furthermore, there are several research studies conducting this film as the corpus. As an example, a research titled with "*Catfishing and Its Implication to Cybercrimes Reflected in Sierra Burgess Is a Loser: A Sociological Perspective,*" written by Rannia Radvani and Dr. M. Thoyibi M.S (2021). As its title, the research finds out the catfishing and its implication to cybercrimes reflected through the film in sociological perspectives (Radvani & Dr. M. Thoyibi, 2021). This research uses Rene Wellek and Austin Warren's theory of sociology and literature study technique to analyze the film. The result of this research is that this film contained catfishing indicators and the implication of catfishing action on cybercrime. The other research is titled "*Persona and Shadow Reflected in The Main Character in The Sierra Burgess Is a Loser Movie (2018)*" written by Anisa Fitrianti Puspitarini (2020). This research mainly discusses the *Persona* and *Shadow* reflected through Sierra's character (Puspitarini, 2020). The researcher uses Carl Jung's psychological theory to analyze the film. In short, the researcher finds out that there is a *persona* and *shadow* reflected through the main character. Furthermore, *a persona* is a mask used by a person to hide his or her true self, and a *shadow* is known as the dark side of a human being in the form of anger that is invisible or hidden in a person (Puspitarini, 2020). The writer chooses the *Sierra Burgess Is a Loser* film as the corpus of the research because it portrays how women struggle to accept their bodies and be themselves as they want to be because of the idealized beauty standards in society. The writer also chooses the body positivity image reflected in this film because this topic has not been discussed before by other researcher. As the main female character in this film, Sierra receives discrimination and bullying from her surroundings because ofs her plus body size. However, despite her plus body size and the ideal standard of society towards women, she can finally accept herself and becomes a confident woman. Sierra shows confidence and intelligence rather than being miserable for what society had put her through. Therefore, the research questions are (1) How is Sierra depicted in the *Sierra Burgess Is a Loser* (2018) film as the main character; (2) How is body positivity reflected through Sierra character.

**Method of Research**

In this research, the writer uses the qualitative research method. According to Norman and Yvonna, qualitative research method involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter that focuses on studying them in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 2). This research uses this method to describe the character analysis of Sierra as the main female character in the *Sierra Burgess Is a Loser* (2018) film. To identify the characterization of Sierra, the writer uses the character and characterization theory by Joseph M. Boggs and Dennis W. Petrie and the representation theory by Stuart Hall to identify body positivity represented through Sierra as the main female character in the film. In completing this research, the writer has watched the film several times critically to investigate body positivity reflected in *Sierra Burgess Is a Loser* film. Then, by watching the film, the writer takes notes and screenshots of the film's scenes and dialogues, which are related to the characterization of Sierra as the main female character reflecting body positivity in the film. After taking notes and gathering the data based on the film, the writer starts to analyze the data by corroborating evidence and theory used in this research to support the analysis and answer the research questions.

The unit analysis of this research is the *Sierra Burgess Is a Loser* film directed by Ian Samuels. This film was produced by *Black Label Media* and presented by *Netflix* on September 7th, 2018 (Samuels, 2018). This film hires Shannon Purser, Kristine Froseth, RJ Cyler, Noah Centino, and others. The writer uses a close read of the film to obtain the data. The writer watches the film critically and compiles and writes some notes based on the character's dialogues, scenes, or acts that can provide answers to the research questions. A close read of a film is the process of gaining an interpretation of a text on its small details and the broader ideas that those details elicit or imply (Jago et al., 2011). The data analysis technique in this research is non-statistical analysis as it is appropriate to analyze qualitative data. The data, which includes the script and screenshot of the film related to the characterization of Sierra and body positivity, are analyzed qualitatively using the character and characterization theory by Joseph M. Boggs and Dennis W. Petrie to reveal body positivity in the *Sierra Burgess Is a Loser* (2018) film through Sierra character. The writer will describe the characterization of Sierra as the main female character in the film by using character and characterization theory by Joseph M. Boggs and Dennis W. Petrie (Petrie & Boggs, 2018). After knowing and describing the characterization, then the writer analyzes the characterization of Sierra that reflects body positivity using feminist approach and representation theory by Stuart Hall (Hall, 1997, p. 2). As for the last step is to write the result of character analysis of Sierra and the conclusion.

**Research Findings**
**A.  Character Analysis of Sierra**

In the *Sierra Burgess Is a Loser* film, Sierra is presented as an **intelligent** woman who loves to read books and can be categorized as a good student in academic in her school. She has an almost perfect SAT or *Scholastic Assessment Test* score, tutoring, joining the marching band, and planning to go to Stanford University. Moreover, by depicting Sierra, who tries to go to Stanford University, this film depicts Sierra as an intelligent woman who will do every possible chance and way, including working on a perfect score in her SAT and joining a marching band to succeed in applying for the famous university. Her teacher also admits Sierra's intelligence. It can be seen from the scene where her teacher is commenting on her poem after class.

> Teacher: *Sierra, your last paper… really wowed me. I just know your poetry is going to outshine all the other poems in the class. It's in your blood.*
>
> (00:05:50-00:06:00)

In this dialogue, the teacher feels amazed by Sierra's poetry. She admitted that Sierra's poetry might outshine when she performed it in front of the class. In this dialogue, the paper the teacher discusses is poetry that resembles how the writer uses and arranges beautiful words into poetry. It means that Sierra has intelligence in writing poetry either she has many vocabularies or is very good at choosing and rearranging words. The teacher also stated that Sierra's poetry is stunning and will stand out from other poetry by her friend in class. She stated that Sierra's talent is in her blood which means that it is her talent to be good in writing. It can also refer to Sierra's father, who is known as a famous writer. According to this dialogue, Sierra gets support from her school teacher, which helps her to boost her confidence to show her values. It shows that having body positivity also requires a supportive surrounding. Positioned as the guide in the school environment, the teacher has a significant role in shaping students' knowledge. Therefore, body positivity also requires women's surroundings to support women in achieving a positive mind about themselves.

This film depicts Sierra's character as an **independent** woman who does not rely on anybody else except herself. She tries to resolve her problems with her effort and capability. It is reflected through the film when her teacher defends Sierra after being insulted by her schoolmates.

> Sierra: *Thank you, but I don't need you to fight my battles for me.*
> Teacher: *Believe me. Everyone knows that, I just really enjoy it.*
>
> (00:05:41-00:05:49)

In this dialogue, Sierra clearly stated her independence in not relying upon anyone else to solve her problems. However, she appreciates her teacher's efforts in defending her from her tormentors in the class. Sierra's statement of not needing others to fight her battles for her suggests that she can fight her problems by herself. It also suggests that Sierra is a strong woman who will fight her own battles and problems. Otherwise, her teacher takes advantage of Sierra's battle to take revenge on the student who bullied Sierra and acted disrespectfully in her class. Her teacher also stated that it was her own will to defend Sierra. This action signifies how women can be responsible for themselves, unaligned with the label of 'weak' that is often commonly associated with women. It shows how patriarchal society tries to preserve its hierarchy by putting a weak label on women and associating them with it. This action proves that Sierra depicts a woman who is strong and independent. She tries to discontinue this stereotype reflected through her action of claiming her battle. This action is possibly understood as a mark for women to show their strength and capability besides obeying society's standards.

Even though Sierra has a fat body, she is pretty **confident** with herself as she thinks that beauty is not only based on women's body and appearance but also their authentic self about themselves. It can be seen through the following picture.

**Figure 1.** Sierra mirrors herself and smiles.

In this scene, Sierra sees herself in the mirror and talks, "*You are a magnificent beast.*" to herself. This scene takes a *medium close-up* type of shot to frame the scene. This type of shot functions to show more detail on the character's emotion as it shows the character's face and its upper body. This scene also uses an eye-level angle in the camera position to emphasize that the character and the audience are in the same position or equal and not to judge them. It emphasizes how the audience may have the same insight as the character. Therefore, the character's emotion can deliver successfully to the audience. This scene holds a powerful message as it describes how Sierra's emotion is depicted in the film. It shows her confidence, intelligence by her words, and her independence. It can be seen through her facial expression when Sierra smiles while seeing herself in the mirror. It suggests her beliefs in herself that she is acknowledging and accepting herself. Sierra uses the phrase *'magnificent beast'* to appraise herself. This word depicts Sierra's character in the film, suggesting her beauty regardless of her appearance. It refers to the greatness of her intelligence and true self as she believes in. By praising herself in the mirror, it signifies that Sierra has reached the acceptance of her body. This action aligns with body positivity, which embraces people to accept and love themselves despite trying to fulfil the idealized beauty standard in society.

## B.  Representation of Women Body Issues in *Sierra Burgess Is a Loser* (2018)

Women body issues are majorly represented in the *Sierra Burgess Is a Loser* (2018) film. Unfortunately, women's bodies historically have been overrepresented in the media compared to men's bodies, and descriptions of women's bodies mostly tend to be more embodied than men's bodies (Bordo, 2013). Unrealistic ideal body standards represented by international media that focus on appearance are becoming more culturally homogeneous. As an example for White western cultures, the ideal female body shape is portrayed slim but full-breasted (Grogan, 2010, p. 759). Through the society which enforced women characters in this film to fulfil the ideal standard, this film brought a major enlightenment for women toward their bodies. By depicting a teenage girl who has a thick body as the main female character, this film tries to represent how women have to face their reality about the social beauty standard. Sierra, as the main female character in the film, has a significant role in delivering messages to the audience about the topic. By carrying women's body issues reflected through the real world, this film tries to enlighten and convince women to love and accept their bodies and change the stereotype toward women bodies. In feminism

studies, body positivity emerged from Body Positive Movement, which is often associated with "postfeminism". According to Gill, postfeminism can be considered as a sensibility, or cultural phenomenon, which emphasizes "the contradictory nature of postfeminist discourses and the entanglement of both feminist and anti-feminist themes within them." Postfeminism is generally characterized by several relatively stable features, including: the notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; the emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline; a focus upon individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; a resurgence in ideas of natural sexual difference; a marked sexualization of culture; and an emphasis upon consumerism and the commodification of difference (Gill, 2007, p. 149). Body positivity aims to change the society's standards which force women to fulfil its standard. It is aligned with feminism's values which aims to stand up for women's rights toward their bodies.

The patriarchal society context in this film is represented through the male characters of this film, such as Dan and Jamey. Dan, known as Sierra's best friend in school, has a significant role in shaping Sierra's perception of herself. In patriarchal society, males have a significant role of being a subject where women are an object valued by their appearance. According to Bordo, women's bodies are socially constructed as objects to watch and evaluate (Bordo, 2013). This depiction aligns with Marchessault, which describes this ideal standard as "the physically impossible, tall, thin and busty Barbie-doll stereotype" (Anderson et al., 2000). In this case, Dan has a role as a male subject who sees and values Sierra as the object according to the societal beauty standard. In this film, Dan validated Sierra's opinion about herself when she felt pessimistic about her looks compared to Veronica, known as the ideal body figure, which is reflected through the following dialogue.

| | |
|---|---|
| Sierra: | *"Okay, well, obviously I can't have him going up to Veronica then. You think I'm crazy?"* |
| Dan: | *"Mm-hmm."* |

(00:21:37-00:21:46)

In this dialogue, Dan validates negative comment said by Sierra toward herself by agreeing with her opinion. It represents how Dan unconsciously forms Sierra's insecurity toward herself. He also opposes Sierra's decision to chase Jamey according to her unideal body and appearance. It shows how a man in a patriarchal society can judge women based on their appearance. If they cannot fulfil the standard, they will fail to reach their goals. Dan even shows his patriarchal side at other times as he takes pictures of Veronica without her permission, where he finds out Veronica has a problem. He did that as he considered Veronica as an object to be documented. Dan even unconsciously said, "*I've got to catch that*" when he sees Veronica bully other students in school. It is obviously considered as an obligation of Dan as a man to value women based on her appearance on any occasion. He also said to Sierra "*I don't really like her. You know? Like she just makes my-…*" after watching it even though Sierra did not ask for his opinion. It represents males' craving for objectifying women and putting themselves as the subject to value women's worth by their appearance.

Jamey, as the other male character in this film, sees Sierra as her type of girlfriend rather than Veronica. He considered Veronica as a beautiful woman reflected through his action and dialogue. He said that Veronica is really beautiful based on her face and body size, but based on her voice, and cold as a person. His friends also show male gaze to Veronica when they first met in the café. In other moment, Jamey also said "*Finally, I get to show you off*" to Veronica in front of his male friends. It represents how a woman considered beautiful or aligns with the societal standard can be judged visually and as an object of the male gaze by men. He also stated that men are the superior sex while talking to Sierra on the phone as she has a mannish voice. It represents how patriarchal society positioned men as superior

or the subject while women were inferior or the object. However, Jamey also considered Sierra as her type of girlfriend as she is smart, funny, and has a beautiful voice. He did not judge Sierra based on her appearance and tended to be captivated by her personality. This case also shows bias where a man have the right to decide whether a woman is beautiful or not and/or women is valued by their appearance. It represents how women were ironically being obligated to the ideal standard existed in a patriarchal society.

Women's vulnerability shows through the poem reading by the female student in Sierra's class, as in the following poem.

*Allowing yourself to be that vulnerable.*
*Who makes and illustrates the way it is?*
*The book whose words and pictures never fade?*
*Who writes the same edition for every decade, plagiarizing and disguising the same old story under the cover of change?*
*Chapter Two, you better claim a shape or they'll name one for you.*
*Gay, straight, black, white, are you the type of girl who's a friend, a fling, or a wife?*
*Check the boxes that apply and don't think your way outside.*
*Replace your legs with pegs and dig a hole to spend your remaining days fitting inside, 'cause that's when you're living it right.*
*At least three feet deep and taking shallow breaths at best, because you air isn't your own, and you're heir to your own life.*

(00:28:21-00:29:09)

In this poem, the speaker delivered her poem amazingly powerful by showing tense in expression and intonation. The first line of this poem describes women to the realization of themselves which allows them to feel vulnerable. The word "it" in the second line refers to the ideal body standard by patriarchal society. It suggests how women questioned the existence of the society's standards. The third line resembled the second line by giving more information about the ideal standard depicted through the magazine, pictures, or other media. It suggests how media has a significant role in perpetuating this unrealistic ideal. The fourth line suggests how women questioned the creator of its standard which changes through time but still limits women in expressing themselves. The fifth line suggests how women react to the standard which enforces them to categorize themselves according to their appearance. The sixth line suggests the categorization or classification of which kind are women have to be. The seventh line suggests the classification of women through the depiction of boxes which can refer to limited space or freedom women can have. The eighth line suggests that how women should enforce themselves to fit and fulfil the standard that existed because it is suitable for them according to society's will. The ninth line suggests how women suffer by letting away their freedom as it is not theirs. In conclusion, this poem shows and describes women's position in society where they are being forced to fulfil the standard to limit their freedom of expression.

Sierra also stated this issue clearly when she confronts Veronica, as the following dialogue.

Sierra: *"You're thinking of Quasimodo, The Hunchback of Notre Dame. He's ridiculed for his appearance and represents a stratified class. Not unlike the structure of our own high school popularity."*

(00:06:38-00:06:44)

In this dialogue, she reveals women body issues through the structure of popularity in her school. She represents how women being judged, valued, and classified by their appearance, which ironically affects their social structure or popularity in her school.

Physical attractiveness has been shown to correlate highly with popularity, dating experience, and marriage opportunities for women than for men (Berscheid et al., 1971, p. 173). Based on this reason, Unger stated that physical beauty could be transformed as a power for women. In other words, attractiveness can function as a primary currency for women's social and economic success (Unger, 1979, p. 1092). Therefore, women's attentiveness to their physical beauty might more appropriately be viewed as women's strategy for helping themselves to determine how others will probably treat them (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 179)which, in turn, can increase women's opportunities for shame and anxiety, reduce opportunities for peak motivational states, and diminish awareness of internal bodily states. Accumulations of such experiences may help account for an array of mental health risks that disproportionately affect women: unipolar depression, sexual dysfunction, and eating disorders. Objectification theory also illuminates why changes in these mental health risks appear to occur in step with life-course changes in the female body.","container-title":"Psychology of Women Quarterly" ,"DOI":"10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00108.x","ISSN":"0361-6843, 1471-6402","issue":"2 ","journalAbbreviation":"Psychology of Women Quarterly","language":"en","page":"173-206","source":"DOI.org (Crossref. Furthermore, according to Frederickson, girls and women possibly come to view themselves to some degree as objects or 'sights' to be appreciated by others (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 180)which, in turn, can increase women's opportunities for shame and anxiety, reduce opportunities for peak motivational states, and diminish awareness of internal bodily states. Accumulations of such experiences may help account for an array of mental health risks that disproportionately affect women: unipolar depression, sexual dysfunction, and eating disorders. Objectification theory also illuminates why changes in these mental health risks appear to occur in step with life-course changes in the female body.","container-title":"Psychology of Women Quarterly" ,"DOI":"10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00108.x","ISSN":"0361-6843, 1471-6402","issue":"2 ","journalAbbreviation":"Psychology of Women Quarterly","language":"en","page":"173-206","source":"DOI.org (Crossref. According to Carla, adolescents who have a high level of body dissatisfaction may also experience a higher level of depression and less positive social interactions leading to lower family relationships (Crespo et al., 2010, p. 1393).

### C.  Body Positivity Reflected through Sierra Character

Body images are related to a person's perceptions, feelings, and thoughts about their body which usually combines body size estimation, body attractiveness evaluation, and emotions associated with body shape and size (Grogan, 2010, p. 757). Women's body satisfaction could be increased by promoting a feminist identity. According to Rachel, it may operate as a buffer through which societal messages may be filtered to enable women to resist the internalization of unrealistic ideal beauty standards (Peterson et al., 2006, p. 243). At the same time, the conceptualization of body positivity is identified as an individual being delighted with its appearance (Halliwell, 2015, p. 1). Therefore, promoting body positivity means encouraging women to embrace their flaws and accept their body shapes and sizes because they deserve to be accepted the way they are. According to Halliwell, body positivity involves the individual feeling competent, free to act, and free to express the self through the body and feel free to challenge the sociocultural standard by society (Halliwell, 2015, p. 1). Tracy and Wood stated that body positivity is multifaceted. It is not a unidimensional construct that can be comprehensively assessed by measuring body satisfaction or how individuals favour their appearance. In fact, it is a multidimensional construct involving much more than body dissatisfaction or appearance evaluation (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015a, p. 5).

1. Body appreciation.

Body appreciation is not only appreciating one's appearance or the extent that one's body aligns with society beauty ideals. In fact, it appreciates the features, functionality, and health. It also involves praising the body for what it can do, what it represents, and its unique features (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015a, p. 5). According to Tracy and Nichole, body positivity emerged from possessing favorable opinions of the body, being respectful and grateful towards the body, rejecting the ideal attractiveness by society, inner positivity influence outer attitude, and broad meaning of beauty (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015a, p. 5).

In this film, Sierra appreciates her body which is reflected through her action when she praises herself while looking at herself in the mirror. She called herself *a magnificent beast* that could represent herself as a human. It signifies her appreciation of her body that she previously disliked or ignored, which is unaligned with society's standard. Sierra shows her gratitude and appreciation for her unique appearance and body features. She acknowledged that focusing on and being grateful for her body functionality can support the positive image of her body. It also signifies her opinion about her body as she viewed it as important aspects of herself that have to be appreciated and taken care of as the scene showed Sierra after taking a bath and cleaning herself. It signifies her effort of maintaining or even improve her body health.

2. Body acceptance and love

Body acceptance and love is not narcissism or vanity. In fact, it is a way of expressing love for and comfort with the body even if one is not completely satisfied with all aspects of the body. Narcissism and vanity are reflected as the result if one's focus aligns with the society's ideal standard, being more attractive than others and doing whatever it takes to achieve and maintain an appearance inconsistent with one's physical features. Body acceptance and love means loving the body for what it can do and its connection to others and accepting one's unique physical features (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015b, p. 5).

In this film, Sierra shows her acceptance and love towards her body when she corrects Veronica after calling Sierra Frodo while she means Quasimodo in the bathroom. Surprised by Sierra's action and feeling ashamed of herself in front of the other students, Veronica responded by saying "*I meant looking at you makes me want to gouge my eyes out.*" which implies her lack of knowledge and attacking Sierra's appearance. Sierra answered it by saying, "*I knew what you meant.*" In this case, Sierra stated this statement confidently with a smile that she already knew what Veronica meant. In this sense, Veronica refers to Sierra as Quasimodo from *the Hunchback of Notre Dame* which represents an ugly or unattractive appearance. By focusing on its appearance and Sierra's confidence, it signifies Sierra's acceptance of her body. She expresses her love and comfort with the body even though it is unaligned with the beauty standard in society. Sierra accepts her unique physical features and her perceived body flaws.

3. Broadly conceptualizing beauty

Broadly conceptualizing beauty is not limited to finding beauty in others. It is not the same as sexual attractiveness. A person may see beauty in someone and may or may not be sexually attracted to him or her. Broadly conceptualizing beauty is the perception that a wide range of appearances can be beautiful, whether these appearances are unchangeable or modifiable. Those who hold a broad conceptualization of beauty may draw from inner characteristics, such as confidence and personality when determining beauty in themselves

and others. For example, people may remark that 'confidence enhance beauty', and one aspect of her beauty is her generosity which suggests that people can find their beauty in themselves, which may not align with the society's beauty ideal (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015b, p. 5).

In this film, Sierra reflects body positivity by broadly conceptualizing beauty reflected through her personality. According to Wood, people who hold a broad conceptualization of beauty may draw from inner characteristics, such as confidence and personality, when determining beauty in themselves and others (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015a, p. 5). Her parents encourage her to feel proud and confident in herself. She translates her intelligence, confidence and independence as her attractiveness. Even though her features are not aligned with the society's beauty ideals, she still manages her body positivity toward her body by not limiting herself conceptualizing beauty. She offers other values of herself such as confidence and personality as her beauty. It signifies that Sierra character emphasizes that being attractive or beautiful does not imply having looks that are consistent and align with the societal definitions of beauty. She signifies that people should try to be themselves rather than strive to attain external ideals for validation. It emphasizes that Sierra appreciates different looks and body shapes. It suggests that body positivity is conceptualized as experienced within oneself or on the 'inside' yet expressed outwardly in their choice of style, grooming, and behaviours, moreover body positivity did not result from looking at oneself in a certain way.

4.   Adaptive appearance investment

Adaptive appearance investment is not engaging in potentially destructive appearance-altering methods to fit society's beauty ideal standard, basing self-worth on appearance, or being preoccupied with appearance fixing behaviours. In fact, it is regularly engaging in appearance-related self-care such as grooming behaviours that project an unique sense of style and personality. It means that it enhances one's natural features via benign methods. In other words, individuals with body positivity neither judge nor ignore their bodies. Instead, they engage in self-care that involves adaptive appearance investment (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015b, p. 6).

In this film, Sierra reflects adaptive appearance investment through her action when she takes care of herself. She brushes her teeth, wears proper clothes for her body, and improves herself through academic activities. She even does not limit herself to eating food that she wants, which signifies that Sierra is not focusing on being aligned and fulfilling the unrealistic standards by society. These behaviours reflected through Sierra signify her acts of kindness toward her body. She does not invest her self-worth in her body or appearance. In fact, Sierra emphasizes that she represents a woman as being well-groomed and projecting their personality, and confidence within their appearances.

5.   Inner positivity

Inner positivity is not vain or narcissistic attitudes toward one's appearance, nor is it expressed in vain or narcissistic acts. In fact, it is the connection between positive body image, positive feelings and adaptive behaviours. It can manifest as smiling, asserting oneself, holding the "head up high" and emanating a 'special grow' or 'outer radiance. Indeed, inner positivity can be described as being happy on the inside, which then reflects on the outside as a confident glow or 'sparkle in the eye' (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015b, p. 6).

In this film, Sierra reflects her inner positivity through her confidence, optimism, and

happiness. It reflects when Sierra is optimistic about applying to Stanford and also get Jamey's heart. She tries to convince Dan that she can make her relationship with Jamey work. Sierra also tries and works hard in managing herself to get to Stanford University. She did various ways to bolster her resume such as, speaking in several language, trying to be a lady runner in man's team, and picking up trash as a participation in social service. This action signifies her positive feelings, which are expressed externally through her action and behaviours. This positive image reflected toward Sierra's body suggests that her disposition or personality can alter their perceived attractiveness. Moreover, inner positivity was tied to physical activity as she involves in academic activity to achieve her goal to Stanford University. It also suggests that Sierra's pride toward her body was experienced internally and expressed externally, which signifies both stemmed from and maintained body positivity.

6.  Filtering information in a body-protective manner

Filtering information in a body protective manner is not foolproof, as individuals with body positivity can be susceptible to body image-related threats at particularly vulnerable times (e.g., when tired, stressed, when the threat comes from someone significant to the individual). In fact, it accepts information that is consistent with a positive image toward the body while rejecting messages that could endanger it. An individual who regularly engages in this filtering process has been referred to as having "a protective filter" (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015b, p. 6).

In this film, Sierra's parent is depicted as a supportive parent who will support their only daughter. It can be seen through the excellent communication and relationship between Sierra and her parent. As Sarah also stated, the family relationship may protect girls from negative sociocultural appearance pressures by providing them with positive messages (Bearman et al., 2006, p. 238). Sierra also protects herself from negative comments about her body when she rejects her mother to take away a toothpaste in her face. This action signifies that Sierra tries to protect herself from the societal beauty standard, which enforces women to be perfect and not tolerate mistakes or untidiness. She also emphasizes that women should be reducing objectification and obsession with their bodies to boost their body positivity. According to Jessie and Michael, an individual who reduces self-objectification towards themselves indirectly affects body positivity (Menzel & Levine, 2011, p. 163)"event-place":"Washington","ISBN":"978-1-4338-0798-5","language":"en","note":"DOI:         10.1037/12304-008","page":"163-186","publisher":"American Psychological Association","publisher-place":"Washington"," source":"DOI.org (Crossref. In another scene, Sierra ignored what the coach said about her when Sierra joined the man's running team to bolster her resume. She still managed to focus on her goal and ignored the negative comment stated by the coach.

**Conclusion**

This research shows that Sierra is depicted as an intelligent, independent, and confident woman through the film. These characteristics were seen through the dialogue, internal and external action, and reaction of other characters in the characterization theory. Her personality traits help her survive the injustice she encountered while accepting her body as a woman who has plus body size in a patriarchal society. These characteristics also reflect woman's figure who has body positivity in the film. As the main female character in the film, Sierra reflects these body positivity qualities through the film. She reflects

body appreciation, body acceptance and love, broadly conceptualizing beauty, adaptive appearance investment, inner positivity, and filtering information in a body protective manner.

*Sierra Burgess Is a Loser* film offers various issues to be discussed. The writer believes that the body positivity reflected by Sierra can be seen and investigated through other perspectives. The writer suggests the researchers interested in similar topic to apply the concept of self-objectification, social comparison theory, or psychological approach since the film contains the body image issue in the society. In addition, the writer believes that this research can serve as one of references for further research interested on the same topic.

## References

Anderson, V., Miedema, B., & Stoppard, J. M. (Eds.). (2000). *Women's bodies/women's lives: Health, well-being and body image*. Sumach Press.

Bearman, S. K., Presnell, K., Martinez, E., & Stice, E. (2006). The Skinny on Body Dissatisfaction: A Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Girls and Boys. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *35*(2), 217–229. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-005-9010-9

Berscheid, E., Dion, K., Walster, E., & Walster, G. W. (1971). Physical attractiveness and dating choice: A test of the matching hypothesis. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *7*(2), 173–189. https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031(71)90065-5

Bordo, S. (2013). *Unbearable weight: Feminism, Western culture, and the body* (10. anniversary ed., [Nachdr.]). Univ. of California Press.

Botta, R. A. (2000). The Mirror of Television: A Comparison of Black and White Adolescents' Body Image. *Journal of Communication*, *50*(3), 144–159. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2000.tb02857.x

Crespo, C., Kielpikowski, M., Jose, P. E., & Pryor, J. (2010). Relationships Between Family Connectedness and Body Satisfaction: A Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Girls and Boys. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *39*(12), 1392–1401. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-009-9433-9

Dake, J. A., Price, J. H., & Telljohann, S. K. (2003). The Nature and Extent of Bullying at School. *Journal of School Health*, *73*(5), 173–180. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2003.tb03599.x

Darwin, H., & Miller, A. (2020). Factions, frames, and postfeminism(s) in the Body Positive Movement. *Feminist Media Studies*, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2020.1736118

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed). Sage.

Dion, K., Berscheid, E., & Walster, E. (1972). What is beautiful is good. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *24*(3), 285–290. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0033731

Field, A. E. (2005). Exposure to the Mass Media, Body Shape Concerns, and Use of Supplements to Improve Weight and Shape Among Male and Female Adolescents. *PEDIATRICS*, *116*(2), e214–e220. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2004-2022

Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T.-A. (1997). Objectification Theory: Toward Understanding Women's Lived Experiences and Mental Health Risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *21*(2), 173–206. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00108.x

Gill, R. (2007). Postfeminist media culture: Elements of a sensibility. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, *10*(2), 147–166. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549407075898

Grogan, S. (2010). Promoting Positive Body Image in Males and Females: Contemporary Issues and Future Directions. *Sex Roles*, *63*(9–10), 757–765. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-010-9894-z

Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage in association with the Open University.

Halliwell, E. (2015). Future directions for positive body image research. *Body Image*, *14*, 177–189. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2015.03.003

Jago, C., Shea, R. H., Scanlon, L., & Aufses, R. D. (2011). *Literature & composition: Reading, writing, thinking*.

Makowski, A. C., Mnich, E. E., Angermeyer, M. C., Löwe, B., & von dem Knesebeck, O. (2015). Sex differences in attitudes towards females with eating disorders. *Eating Behaviors*, *16*, 78–83. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eatbeh.2014.10.017

Menzel, J. E., & Levine, M. P. (2011). Embodying experiences and the promotion of positive body image: The example of competitive athletics. In R. M. Calogero, S. Tantleff-Dunn, & J. K. Thompson (Eds.), *Self-objectification in women: Causes, consequences, and counteractions.* (pp. 163–186). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/12304-008

Miller, A. G. (1970). Role of physical attractiveness in impression formation. *Psychonomic Science*, *19*(4), 241–243. https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03328797

Peterson, R. D., Tantleff-Dunn, S., & Bedwell, J. S. (2006). The effects of exposure to feminist ideology on women's body image. *Body Image*, *3*(3), 237–246. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2006.05.004

Petrie, D. W., & Boggs, J. M. (2018). *The art of watching films* (Ninth edition). McGraw-Hill Education.

Reis, H. T., Nezlek, J., & Wheeler, L. (1980). Physical attractiveness in social interaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *38*(4), 604–617. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.38.4.604

Samuels, I. (2018, September 7). *Sierra Burgess Is A Loser* [Romantic Comedy]. Netflix. https://www.netflix.com/id/title/80239639

Sastre, A. (2014). Towards a Radical Body Positive: Reading the online "body positive movement." *Feminist Media Studies*, *14*(6), 929–943. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2014.883420

Solomon, M. R., Ashmore, R. D., & Longo, L. C. (1992). The Beauty Match-Up Hypothesis: Congruence between Types of Beauty and Product Images in Advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, *21*(4), 23–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1992.10673383

Thompson, J. K., & Stice, E. (2001). Thin-Ideal Internalization: Mounting Evidence for a

New Risk Factor for Body-Image Disturbance and Eating Pathology. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *10*(5), 181–183. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.00144

Tylka, T. L., & Wood-Barcalow, N. L. (2015a). What is and what is not positive body image? Conceptual foundations and construct definition. *Body Image*, *14*, 118–129. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2015.04.001

Tylka, T. L., & Wood-Barcalow, N. L. (2015b). What is and what is not positive body image? Conceptual foundations and construct definition. *Body Image*, *14*, 118–129. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2015.04.001

Unger, R. K. (1979). Toward a redefinition of sex and gender. *American Psychologist*, *34*(11), 1085–1094. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.34.11.1085