

Enhancing Self-efficacy to Resist Body Shaming in Jacqueline Wilson's *Lola Rose*

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ABSTRACT

Jacqueline Wilson is a former Children's Laureate whose contemporary realistic children's novels have been translated into over 30 languages for her predominantly pre-adolescent and teen-girl readers. However, many adults feel that her works are unsuitable for children due to the contemporary realistic issues discussed. This has resulted in a gap within the scholarship devoted to serious analyses of her books. The paper discusses her novel, *Lola Rose* (2003), with attention given to Lola Rose, the pre-adolescent girl protagonist. It looks at how Lola Rose suffered from her mother's repeated acts of body shaming, causing her to carry a negative body image and sense of insecurity. Using the concept of self-efficacy expounded by Albert Bandura in his work, *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control* (1997), the research examines how sources of efficacy information such as enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and improved physiological and affective states, enhance Lola Rose's sense of agency. This empowers her to resist the destructive forms of body shaming experienced. The paper argues that contemporary realistic children's novels such as Wilson's are useful tools to empower children in overcoming the threats of body shaming.

Keywords: Albert Bandura, body shaming, Jacqueline Wilson, Lola Rose, self-efficacy

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INTRODUCTION

Jacqueline Wilson is a prolific author of children's literature whom Tucker and Gamble (2001) described as "a serious writer, with some important things to say about children, parents and the nature of contemporary childhood itself" (p. 84).

According to Howarth (2006), she is “one of the most influential writers of her generation” (p. 45). Awarded the prestigious title of Children’s Laureate from 2005-2007, Wilson is a “household name [and a] literary phenomenon” (Corbett, 2007, p. 33) within the English reading community, particularly in the United Kingdom. Despite that, there is a noticeable gap in the scholarship devoted to serious analyses of her novels (Armitstead, 2004; Corbett, 2007; Duncan, 2009). This is partly due to the contemporary realistic issues discussed within the works which many adults feel are unsuitable for children. These issues include topics such as “dysfunctional families, homelessness, and domestic violence” (“Dame Jacqueline”, 2008, par. 2), “breast cancer, nervous breakdown, broken homes” (Kellaway, 2005, par. 6), “children in care [and] step-families” (Howarth, 2006, par. 12). Moreover, the stories do not always portray happy endings, a factor deterring parents and teachers from introducing the books to children under their care. Duncan (2009) thus stated:

[t]he fact that her work has not yet been a subject for serious academic debate in the world of children’s literature is a matter of regret. A writer who sells two million books a year is a phenomenon that needs to be understood with greater critical insight than she currently is (p. 172).

Drawing from that, the study selects Wilson’s *Lola Rose* (2003) and analyzes

the element of body shaming present within the novel which reflects the challenges and struggles that modern children are increasingly threatened with.

For Prater et al. (2006), children’s literature could serve as a useful tool to help young readers identify with and address some of the contemporary realistic issues experienced in their lives. Likewise, Joshua and DiMenna (as cited in Prater et al., 2006) believed that fictional works could be used “to provide information or insight about problems, stimulate discussion about problems, create awareness that other people have similar problems, and in some cases provide solutions to problems” (p. 6). Scholars agree that although Wilson’s works use simple literary conventions, they highlight important issues affecting the young (Pinsent, as cited in Armitstead, 2004; Brown, 2005; Said, 2001). As Duncan (2009) observed, “behind their easy-to-follow narrative and plot line there is a social, psychological and narrative complexity that reveals real sorrow, desperate hardship, moments of grief and unspeakable suffering that Wilson does not shrink from confronting” (p. 167). Unlike the protagonist in Rowling’s Harry Potter series, Wilson’s “lead characters do not find redemption and a heroic role in life through escapist fantasy” (Brown, 2003, par. 10). Rather, they rely on a sense of self-agency to transcend the difficulties and challenges faced as a result of parental irresponsibility. This fulfills Wilson’s aim “to show that all children are affected by the capricious adults who take care of them” (Eccleshare, 2002, par. 4) since “[m]any of her books depict

the grim realities of life and there is no masking the constant disappointments that both children and adults have to contend on a daily basis” (“The chance”, 2006, par. 3). Viewing that, the paper charts how Lola Rose learns self-efficacy to manage her encounters with body shaming within the novel. For this, the study uses the concept of self-efficacy expounded by Albert Bandura in his work *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control* (1997). In it, Bandura forwarded four sources of efficacy information which enhanced one’s sense of efficacy beliefs. They were enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and improved physiological and affective states. By tracing how Lola Rose’s elevated sense of self-efficacy empowers her to resist the body shaming experienced, the research therefore aims to offer viable solutions to the escalating occurrences of such maltreatment affecting our children.

METHODS

The study first traced the instances of body shaming which Lola Rose experienced from her mother and other characters within the novel. It then analysed how the sources of efficacy information such as enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and improved physiological and affective states, helped to enhance Lola Rose’s sense of self-efficacy and empower her to overcome the threats of body shaming encountered. The following paragraphs explicate the sources of efficacy information and how they function to enhance a person’s perceived self-efficacy.

According to Bandura (1994), “[p]erceived self-efficacy is concerned with people’s beliefs in their capabilities to exercise control over their own functioning and over events that affect their lives” (par. 75). For Schultz and Schultz (2008), self-efficacy involved “our sense of self-esteem or self-worth, our feeling of adequacy, efficiency, and competence in dealing with problems” (p. 354). Cardwell and Flanagan (2003) summarized it simply as a person’s “perceived self-effectiveness” (p. 146). Within the concept, Bandura postulated four sources of information which enhanced perceptions of self-efficacy “including mastery, how people learn; the role that social persuasion and support play in encouraging behavior; and the ways people regulate their own behavior” (Foster, 2006, par. 10). Specifically, these sources encompass enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and improved physiological and affective states.

Bandura (1997) referred to enactive mastery experience as “experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort” (p. 80) which he believed to be “the most influential source of efficacy information because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed” (Bandura, 1997, p. 80). It is also regarded as “the principal means of personality change” (Bandura, 1994, par. 24) because enactive mastery experience “produces stronger and more generalized efficacy beliefs than do modes of influence relying solely on vicarious experiences, cognitive

simulations, or verbal instruction” (Bandura, 1997, p. 80). This is because the method involves the strategy of “breaking down complex skills into easily mastered subskills and organizing them hierarchically” (Bandura, 1997, p. 80) which increases the frequency of success in task performances. Therefore, the effectiveness of enactive mastery experiences in building self-efficacy necessarily includes repeated and perseverant effort as well as consistent exercise of skills in overcoming the struggles faced while fulfilling a certain task. Pajares (2002) rightly pointed out that “strong self-efficacy beliefs are generally the product of time and multiple experiences” (par. 25) coupled by the strength of “self-motivational and self-management capabilities” (Bandura, 1997, p. 104), and the ability to “handle pressure and failure well” (Bandura, 1997, p. 104). Bandura (1994) further explained that enactive mastery experiences accumulated from past accomplishments built “coping skills and instill beliefs that one can exercise control over potential threats” (par. 24). Subsequent successes thereby strengthen efficacy beliefs to the extent that “occasional failures are unlikely to have much effect on judgments of one’s capabilities” (Bandura, 1986, p. 399).

The second source of efficacy information involves vicarious experience where individuals learn self-efficacy and improve their personal competency through “observing how other people behave and seeing the consequences of their behaviour” (Schultz & Schultz, 2008, p. 353) particularly from “proficient models

who possess the competencies to which they aspire” (Bandura, 1997, p. 88). Although not as indicative as enactive mastery experience, “modeling influences that enhance perceived self-efficacy can weaken the impact of direct experiences of failure by sustaining performances in the face of repeated failure” (Bandura, 1986, p. 400). Further, research has shown that “[w]hen adequacy must be gauged largely in relation to the performance of others, social comparison operates as a primary factor in the self-appraisal of capabilities” (Festinger, 1954; Goethals & Darley, 1977; Suls & Miller, 1977, as cited in Bandura, 1997, p. 87). By drawing motivation from competent others through social comparison, vicarious experience is thus able to “alter efficacy beliefs through transmission of competencies” (Bandura, 1997, p. 79).

The third source of self-efficacy appraisal comes from verbal persuasion which includes feedback and judgments that others provide pertaining to one’s competency. Bandura (1997) observed that a person’s self-efficacy was also enhanced when “significant others express faith in one’s capabilities than if they convey doubts” (p. 101) during difficult phases. Accordingly, “[p]eople who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given tasks are likely to mobilize greater effort and sustain it than if they harbour self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when difficulties arrive” (Bandura, 1997, p. 106). This is especially salient during the early stages of skill development. Bandura (1997) opined that

[d]uring formative years, the significant models in people's lives play a key role in instilling beliefs of their potential and power to influence the direction their lives take. These self-beliefs shape basic orientations to life. People who triumph over severe adversities provide some of the most striking testimony of enduring persuasory influences (p. 106).

The fourth source of efficacy information forwarded by Bandura was conveyed through a person's physiological and affective states. These involve an individual's bodily functions as well as emotional experiences during task engagements. Bandura (1997) maintained that people determined their capabilities based on "somatic information conveyed by physiological and emotional states" (p. 106) which helped them to "judge their capableness, strength, and vulnerability to dysfunction" (p. 79). The physiological and affective indicators "are especially relevant in domains that involve physical accomplishments, health functioning, and coping with stressors" (Bandura, 1997, p. 106). Understanding one's physiological and affective states therefore allows the individual to improve his / her "physical status, reduce stress levels and negative emotional proclivities, and correct misinterpretations of bodily states" (Bandura, 1991a; Cioffi, 1991a, as cited in Bandura, 1997, p. 106). Subsequently, an improved physiological and affective state increases one's sense of self-efficacy to overcome the challenges faced.

Research over the years have affirmed the influence of self-efficacy as a fundamental factor in determining an individual's sense of agency (Bandura et al., 2001; Foster, 2006; Gariglietti et al., 1997; Pajares, 1997; Pajares & Schunk, 2002; Schultz & Schultz, 2008). This is because

beliefs of personal efficacy touch virtually every aspect of people's lives – whether they think productively, self-debilitatingly, pessimistically or optimistically; how well they motivate themselves and persevere in the face of adversities; their vulnerability to stress and depression and the life choices they make (Pajares, 2004, par. 23).

Following that, "understanding critical issues related to our children's sense of self is crucial to understanding the manner in which they deal with all of life's tasks and challenges" (Pajares & Schunk, 2002, p. 4). For this reason, Bandura (1986) asserted that

[e]ducational practices should be gauged not only by the skills and knowledge they impart for present use but also by what they do to children's beliefs about their capabilities, which affects how they approach the future. Students who develop a strong sense of self-efficacy are well equipped to educate themselves when they have to rely on their own initiative. (p. 417).

Further, Pajares and Schunk (2002) were of the view that children's encounters with personal agency were

mediated by adults who can empower them with self-assurance or diminish their fledgling self-beliefs. Because young children are not proficient at making accurate self-appraisals, they rely on the judgments of others to create their own judgments of confidence and of self-worth. (p. 22).

Likewise for Lehman (2007), reading and thinking about literary characters who exhibit self-efficacy allow children to model after the empowering behaviours of these characters. As such, relating fictional events to personal experiences helps readers to imagine "solutions to problems and give them a sense of vicarious accomplishment through these resolutions. Children then can apply or adapt these models to their own lives" (Lehman, 2007, p. 111). In view of that, the paper explores how each of the four sources of efficacy information contributes to Lola Rose's recognition of her agency, leading to the enhancement of her self-efficacy which empowers her to overthrow the instances of body shaming experienced.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Wilson's *Lola Rose* (2003) is narrated from the lens of 11-year-old Jayni. The story begins with her mother, Nikki, running away from Lola Rose's abusive father, Jay. With the £10, 000 that Vicky wins from a scratch card lottery ticket, she brings

along the pre-adolescent girl protagonist and her younger brother, Kenny, to start a new life in London. In order to prevent Jay from tracking them, Nikki takes on the pseudonym Victoria (Vicky) Luck while Jayni adopts the glamorous-sounding Lola Rose¹. Kenny decides to rename himself as Kendall. Soon after, Vicky becomes romantically involved with an art student named Jake who moves in with them. However, the relationship is short-lived when Vicky discovers that she has breast cancer. Jake leaves her after realizing that she has run out of lottery money. As Vicky is admitted into the hospital for surgery, Lola Rose relocates Auntie Barbara, her mother's long lost elder sister for assistance. Auntie Barbara's appearance within the second half of the novel thus provides the source of strength and stability for the runaway family.

Notwithstanding the many forms of abuse which Lola Rose endures from her mother, the paper gives particular attention to the repeated occurrences of body shaming affecting the pre-adolescent girl protagonist. Throughout her growing up years, Lola Rose often observes her mother subjecting herself to objectification by flaunting her body for public viewing. She narrates:

[Mum] did a bit of modeling when she was younger. She's got her own scrapbook with pages cut out of newspapers and magazines. We're not supposed to look, Kenny and me, because Mum isn't wearing a

¹ The paper will henceforth refer to them according to their newly adopted names.

lot and some of the poses are quite sexy. (Wilson, 2003, p. 10).

This communicates an unconscious message that is destructive to Lola Rose's body image. Gilligan (1982) maintained that "girls, in identifying themselves as female, experience themselves as like their mothers, thus fusing the experience of attachment with the process of identity formation" (p. 8). For Orbach (2009), the family is where a girl's consciousness of her body is first acquired, absorbed and transmitted (p. 8). Resulting from Vicky's preoccupation with physical perfection, Lola Rose looks at her own body with a sense of shame and disgust:

I've tried locking the bathroom door and stripping down to my knickers and trying out some of those poses myself. I look *ridiculous* [...] I haven't got a proper figure. It doesn't go in and out in the right places. My hair's wrong too [...] It's boring old mouse (Wilson, 2003, p. 10-11, italics original).

Pipher (1994) noted that "the pressure to be beautiful is most intense in early adolescence. Girls worry about their clothes, make up, skin and hair. But most of all they worry about their weight" (p. 183). Likewise, Orbach (2009) expressed her concern towards young girls who were "made bodily self-conscious and are striking sexy poses in their mirrors which are more chilling than charming" (p. 3). She also cautioned against the damaging "preoccupation with thinness and beauty which has been eroding

individual self-worth" (Orbach, 2009, p. 4). Within the novel, this preoccupation with physical appearance leads Lola Rose to seek external factors to substitute her lack of self-worth. She renamed herself 'Lola Rose' after a model from her scrapbook, believing that the borrowed identity was able to transform her into a physically attractive person and increase her social acceptance. She also convinced herself that owning a new pink furry denim jacket enhanced her physical appeal.

Not only that, Lola Rose was frequently exposed to her mother's acts of body shaming. This was directed both towards Lola Rose and her Auntie Barbara. Vicky made derogatory remarks about their physical built:

'If you think [the hotel cleaning maid] was fat you should see your Auntie Barbara,' said Mum. (Wilson, 2003, p. 67).

'What's with the whale lady? [...] she's a dead spit of your Auntie Barbara.' Mum giggled and adjusted her jeans over her own tiny hips. (Wilson, 2003, p. 111).

'You're starting to sound just like your Auntie Barbara,' said Mum. 'Watch out you don't start to look like her too!' She started poking my tummy. (Wilson, 2003, p. 126).

Vicky's demeaning comments convey to Lola Rose that a person's body size becomes "a primary form of identity" (Conroy, 2015,

par. 7). The repeated emphasis that “fat is bad and thin is good” (Orr, 2009, par. 3) hence invokes within the pre-adolescent girl protagonist “an underlying anxiety” (Conroy, 2015, par. 17) about her own physical imperfections. Throughout her career counselling adolescent girls, Pipher (1994) noticed that “[g]irls are terrified of being fat [...] Being fat means being left out, scorned and vilified [...] Because of guilt and shame about their bodies, young women are constantly on the defensive” (p. 184). For Montemayor and Eisen (1977), physical attributes is one of the vital indications of how young children “conceive of and describe themselves” (p. 315). The preoccupation with a socially accepted physical make up which Lola Rose learns from her mother therefore becomes a detrimental element which undermines her sense of self and identity within the story.

Lola Rose’s first encounter with a healthy body image in the text comes from the cleaning maid of their hotel room in London. The unnamed maid is portrayed as a large-sized lady who nevertheless exudes confidence, self-acceptance and joy. Despite her stature, the maid demonstrates skill and agility in dancing without showing any sense of embarrassment towards her physical attributes (Wilson, 2003, p. 67). By observing her, Lola Rose realizes that physical appearance does not hinder one from living a contented life. Moreover, the maid encourages and guides them to the housing association through which the family eventually secures a flat to start their new lives in London (Wilson, 2003, p. 72-

74). This vicarious experience garnered from the maid raises Lola Rose’s sense of agency and self-efficacy towards her body image.

The second character whom the pre-adolescent girl protagonist meets is Ms. Balsam, the head teacher of her new school in London. Lola Rose describes her as “wasn’t very pretty but she didn’t seem to care [...] her clothes certainly weren’t posh. She was wearing comfy old trousers and a creased jacket with bulging pockets” (Wilson, 2003, p. 96). However, the headteacher exhibits compassion and tact as she bypasses the bureaucratic procedures in order to enrol the children into the school, thereby affording them an opportunity for education. Through the examples of vicarious experience observed from the cleaning maid’s kindness and generosity as well as Ms. Balsam’s benevolence despite their unattractive physical built, Lola Rose’s self-efficacy is enhanced to withstand the acts of body shaming experienced.

The body shaming which the pre-adolescent girl protagonist experiences continue to worsen when Vicky begins a relationship with Jake. In the aftermath of an argument with Lola Rose, Vicky ridicules her physical features: “‘Don’t kid yourself *you’ll* ever get a man like Jake,’ she said looking me up and down” (Wilson, 2003, p. 119, italics original). Consequently, Lola Rose’s body image is affected:

I’d hoped I’d grow up little and pretty like Mum. I’d so hope it might happen when I turned into

Lola Rose. But now I wondered how I'd kidded myself. Mum had made it obvious. I wasn't ever going to look like her. I'd end up like Auntie Barbara instead" (Wilson, 2003, p. 120-121).

Although she is unable to resist her mother's damaging acts of body shaming, Lola Rose is nevertheless able to stop the teasing of the neighbourhood boys:

'Give us a kiss then, Lola Rose,' [Peter] called.

I pulled a face at him. 'Get lost, Peter Piglet,' I said fiercely [...]

The other boys laughed, and made more kissing noises [...] I hurtled down the street away from them. I ran and ran away from their raucous laughter (Wilson, 2003, p. 121-122).

This represents her enactive mastery experience in resisting their sexual harassment. Through the incident, her sense of agency and self-efficacy are enhanced.

As the story progresses, Vicky continues to show off her thin figure which earns Jake's affection and praise: "I think [your figure] is gorgeous,' said Jake. Mum beamed and nodded her head at me, as if to say, *So there!*" (Wilson, 2003, p. 124, italics original). Due to that, Lola Rose's self-esteem gradually diminishes. When Kendall likens her to a fish (p. 129), the pre-adolescent girl protagonist's body image plummets: "I just wished I *looked* more

like my idea of Lola Rose" (Wilson, 2003, p. 129, italics original). This corroborates Orbach's (2009) observation that

[c]hildren who feel that they are unloved can believe that there must be something very wrong about them which makes them unacceptable. The stinging sense of being not right causes them confusion and hurt, but they do not give up the desire for love and acceptance [...] their pursuit of love and acceptance will dovetail with an attempt to change themselves into someone the child himself can accept (p. 18-19).

The influence of Vicky's body shaming sets within Lola Rose a mindset that her body must conform to an ideal physical type in order to secure love and acceptance. According to Pipher (1994), girls are increasingly measuring their own bodies to "cultural ideals and find them wanting" (p. 184). In her desperate desire to seek validation, Lola Rose attempts to assimilate her mother's image onto herself by adorning Vicky's make up and clothes. She then parades herself around the neighbourhood to covet social acceptance (Wilson, 2003, p. 129-130). The attention which the pre-adolescent girl protagonist garners from her neighbours temporarily pacifies the emotional effects of the body shaming experienced (Wilson, 2003, p. 131-133), thereby increasing her physiological and affective states.

Nevertheless, Lola Rose remains insecure in her value and self-worth. She admits:

I couldn't convince myself. I could call myself Lola Rose until the cows came home but I was still stuck being shy, soft old Jayni. I was never going to get pretty and sparky and sexy like Mum. I was going to get bigger and blobbier and end up like Auntie Barbara, just as Mum said. Poor elephantine Auntie Barbara who was so wibbly wobbly that no man would ever want her. Maybe no man would ever want me. (Wilson, 2003, p. 134).

The passage shows how the pre-adolescent girl protagonist is affected by her frequent experiences with body shaming. These lead her to think that being fat isolates and invalidates a woman. Similarly, Pipher (1994) worried about how girls "have been culturally conditioned to hate their bodies, which are after all themselves" (p. 184). The excerpt above clearly shows how Lola Rose exhibits a sense of self-loathe towards her own body. Convinced that securing a man's affection is the only means of regaining her self-worth, Lola Rose hence sets out to display herself to the neighbourhood boys whose sexual advances she previously rejected. In their presence, she allows herself to be objectified. At the same time, she fantasizes about being romantically involved with Ross, the leader of the group. According to Orbach (2009), "[g]irlie-sexy culture now entrances more rather than

fewer of us. Putting the body on show and making it appear 'attractive' are presented as fun, desirable and easily accessible" (p. 2). Resulting from that, Lola Rose is sexually assaulted (Wilson, 2003, p. 135-137).

Through her enhanced sense of self-efficacy, however, the pre-adolescent girl protagonist is empowered to resist the sexual aggression by shouting for help. Her cries catches the attention of Ms Balsam, who happens to be walking her dogs nearby (Wilson, 2003, p. 137-138). The headteacher rescues Lola Rose and accompanies her home. During their journey, Ms Balsam affirms Lola Rose's self-worth and value: "You *are* somebody, Lola Rose. You're a very special, clever, creative girl, and very mature for your age too" (Wilson, 2003, p. 140, italics original). This act of verbal persuasion enhances the pre-adolescent girl protagonist's self-efficacy. When Jake degrades her in the following scene, Lola Rose is able to regulate her emotions and manage her disappointment:

'Look!' I copied one of Mum's favourite poses, head tilted up, mouth slightly open, chest thrust forward, hand on hip, one knee slightly bent. 'For God's sake,' said Jake cruelly. I rushed off to the bathroom, not wanting Jake to call me a crybaby too. 'I hate him,' I muttered, hugging myself. (Wilson, 2003, p. 159).

This enactive mastery experience empowers her to endure the persistent onslaught of body shaming experienced.

As her self-efficacy increases, *Lola Rose* displays a better sense of body image. This is exemplified when she comforts her mother who laments about her aging skin (Wilson, 2003, p. 174).

Auntie Barbara's arrival into their lives in the second half of the story further reinforces *Lola Rose*'s self-efficacy against the occurrences of body shaming within the novel. Although portrayed as "a very large woman" (Wilson, 2003, p. 217), Auntie Barbara is regarded as a stature of stability and security. This presents a stark comparison against Vicky's small physique which lacks warmth and safety:

Whenever I hugged Mum hard she always teetered on her heels and said, 'Careful, you'll knock me over.'

'No one could knock Auntie Barbara over. She didn't budge an inch. She stayed still, like a well-upholstered sofa, while I leant against her and cried on the big soft cushion of her chest (Wilson, 2003, p. 217).

The pre-adolescent girl protagonist also observes how her aunt models natural beauty and confidence without resorting to make-up or other enhancement products. Auntie Barbara's body image, self-esteem and social acceptance are neither dependant on her physical size nor easily threatened by the impression and reception of other characters within the novel (Wilson, 2003, p. 218-219; 231; 287). On the contrary, she demonstrates contentment and self-

sufficiency by adapting her lifestyle to complement her large features: "She makes most of her clothes because she's so huge she can't find anything in the shops" (Wilson, 2003, p. 229). *Lola Rose* thus derives vicarious experience through Auntie Barbara's healthy body image. In addition, she finds solace in seeing how her aunt indulges in eating without feeling any sense of guilt or self-condemnation. Instead, Auntie Barbara is able to joke about her size (pp. 220-221; 237). When *Lola Rose* laments that she does not inherit Vicky's physical attributes, her aunt verbally persuades her: "I don't think you need take after anyone. You're yourself. Unique. The one and only Jayni" (Wilson, 2003, p. 221). These sources of efficacy information obtained from Auntie Barbara thus enhance the pre-adolescent girl protagonist's sense of agency and self-efficacy which empower her to subvert the effects of body shaming experienced.

As *Lola Rose*'s self-efficacy develops, she is able to better resist the instances of body shaming encountered. She opposes her classmate's pre-occupation with thinness and speaks out against the body shaming directed at Auntie Barbara (Wilson, 2003, p. 234-235). These examples show the transformation of the pre-adolescent girl protagonist's mindset from being fixated on mere physical appeal to one that embraces a healthy body image. Trites (1997) opines that "[t]his reconnection with the community is only made possible by the words of a woman's narratives that validate the girl's sense of self" (p. 127). In Wilson's *Lola*

Rose, it is the vicarious experience which Lola Rose receives from the hotel maid, her headteacher and her Auntie Barbara which enhance her sense of self and perceived efficacy.

When Jay reappears in the novel, the pre-adolescent girl protagonist witnesses her Auntie Barbara's resistance against his attempt at body shaming Vicky (Wilson, 2003, p. 244). Through this example of vicarious experience, Lola Rose learns empowerment to defend both her mother and her aunt against her father's insults (Wilson, 2003, p. 257; 264; 285). Seeing how Vicky loses her hair and puts on weight during the cancer treatment also awakens Lola Rose to the frailty of a person's physical appearance and the temporal security that it offers. From her enhanced sense of self-efficacy, the pre-adolescent girl protagonist is able to complement her Auntie Barbara in restoring Vicky's body image and sense of self (Wilson, 2003, p. 282-285). The novel concludes with Lola Rose affirming her mother's worth and value independent of her physical outlook: "We all knew Mum could still pull any bloke she fancied, fat or thin" (Wilson, 2003, p. 288).

Through her enhanced sense of self-efficacy gained from the sources of efficacy information such as enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and improved physiological and affective states, Lola Rose is empowered to resist and overthrow the detrimental influences of body shaming throughout the novel. She eventually adopts a healthy body image and learns that her self-worth is neither dependant on body size nor

men's validation. Rather, she celebrates the uniqueness of her individuality as the authentic reflection of her value and worth. In line with Orbach's (as cited in Orr, 2009) argument that "human bodies have never been merely the product of the genetic imprints they inherit, but are shaped by upbringing" (par. 11), the discussion therefore highlights how a children's text "is ideologically explicit in depicting the rejection of stereotypes as a weapon children can use against societal pressure to conform to traditional gender roles" (Trites, 1997, p. 23). As such, the paper concurs with Orbach (as cited in Orr, 2009) that "we need to be more robust [...] in defending ourselves, and our children, against such balefully disruptive psychological pressures" (par. 13). There is indeed much to be done in helping our children accept their own bodily features, one of it is through using literary works to instill a sense of healthy body image within young girls.

CONCLUSION

Despite the concerns surrounding Wilson's contemporary realistic children's novels addressed at the outset of the paper, the discussion argues for the importance of analyzing her works. Specifically, it highlights how these works can be useful tools to empower children in overcoming the threats of body shaming. Through understanding how Lola Rose's self-efficacy is enhanced via enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and improved physiological and affective states as proposed by Bandura, the paper

strengthens Guerra's (2012) claimed that "[l]iterature is powerful in its capacity to introduce new ideas and contribute to belief formation" (p. 386). Concluding, the study echoes Pajares' (1997) contention that

[a]s the world shrinks, attempting to understand to what degree the effects of self-efficacy are universal across cultures seems more critical than ever. Cross-cultural research will help clarify how efficacy beliefs are created and develop as a result of different cultural practices, as well as how these differing cultural practices influence children's efficacy beliefs (par. 88).

In particular, the emphasis on healthy body image aims to show how young girls "can learn to recognize the forces that shape them and make conscious choices about what they will and won't endure [and] become whole adults in a culture that encourages them to become forever the object of another's gaze" (Pipher, 1994, p. 253). The findings of this study therefore hope to contribute in helping young girls develop a strong sense of self-efficacy to combat the societal pressures seeking to objectify their bodies.

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