

Socially Deviant Communities Online:

How the Pro-Anorexia Movement Utilizes the Anonymity Provided by the Internet to Thrive

Lee Honors College Thesis

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Clinical Definition of Anorexia Nervosa

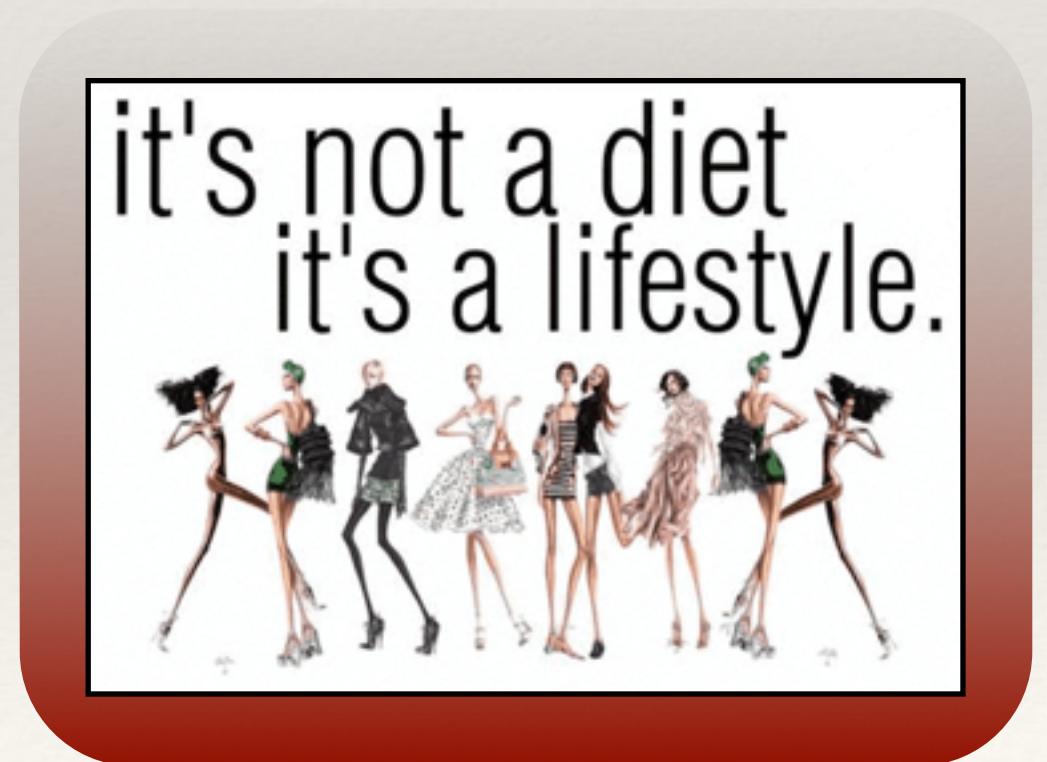
Anorexia nervosa (AN): One of the major eating disorders recognized by the DSM-V

- Highest mortality rate of all eating disorders => suicide
- Major characteristics
 - Fear of becoming fat or weight gain
 - Consistent energy intake restriction
 - Repeated behaviors preventing weight gain
 - Distorted perception of weight or body shape
- Two types of AN: Restricting type AN and binge/purge type AN

¿What is Pro-Anorexia?

Pro-Anorexia: An online movement and community which promotes and celebrates Anorexia Nervosa and other similar eating disorders

- No official definition, varies from source to source
 - Promotion of eating disorders as a lifestyle choice
 - Celebration of eating disorders
 - Acceptance of eating disorders
 - Supporting those with eating disorders



Content of Pro-Anorexia Sites

Pro-Anorexia blogs and forums have a large variety of content

More often

- Journals
- Poetry
- Artwork
- Tips and tricks
- Thinspiration

Less often

- Caloric calculators and charts
- Self-harm material

Tomorrow, Ana

tomorrow Ana i'll start brand new
i'll be strong driven and more like you
food wont tempt me anymore
i'll pass it by and be all that you adore
tomorrow ana i'm on my way
i'll be much better than i was today
one day i'll step on that scale
i'll smile and thank Ana i did not fail
tomorrow will be the new me
i'll be thin pure and fat free
finally everyone will see, who i'm supposed to be
-Anonymous

Pro-Ana As a Deviant Community

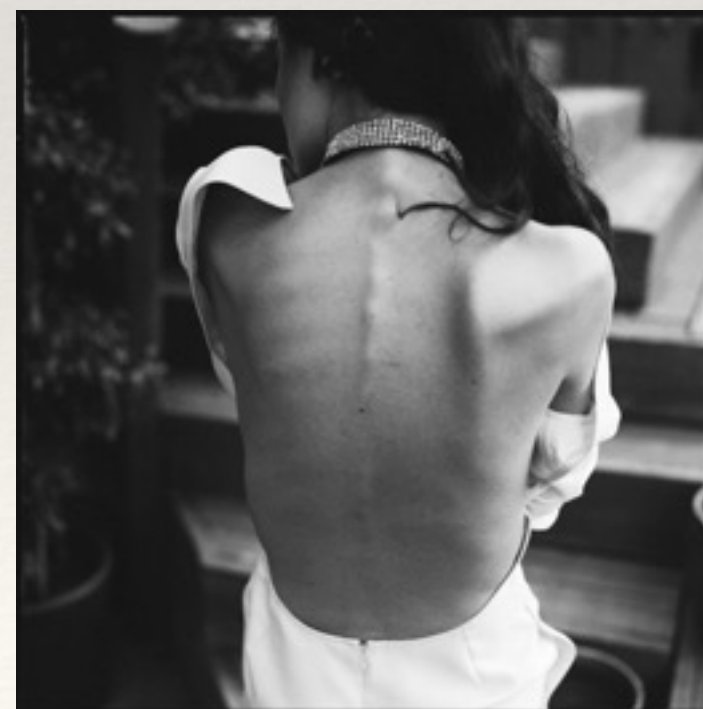
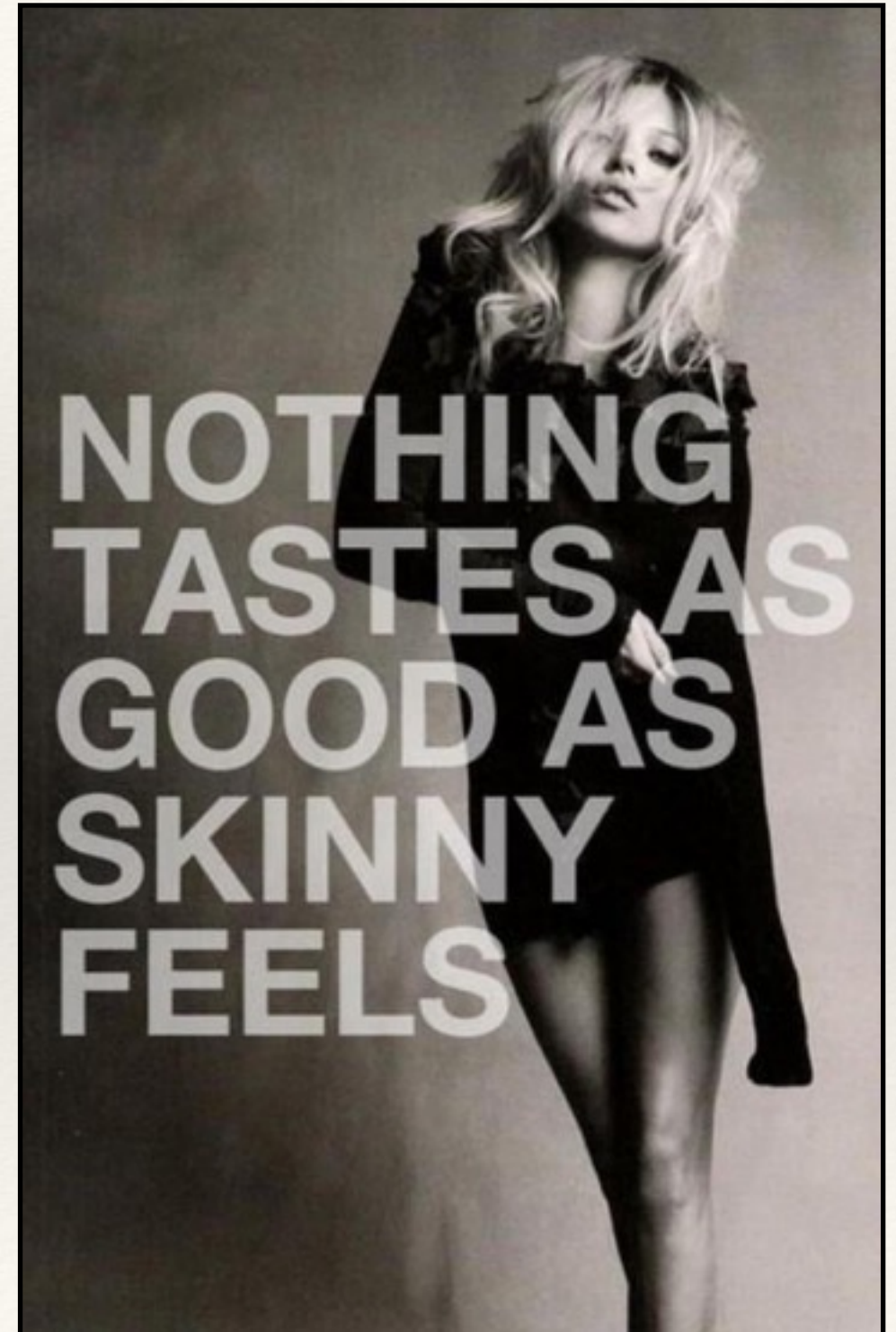
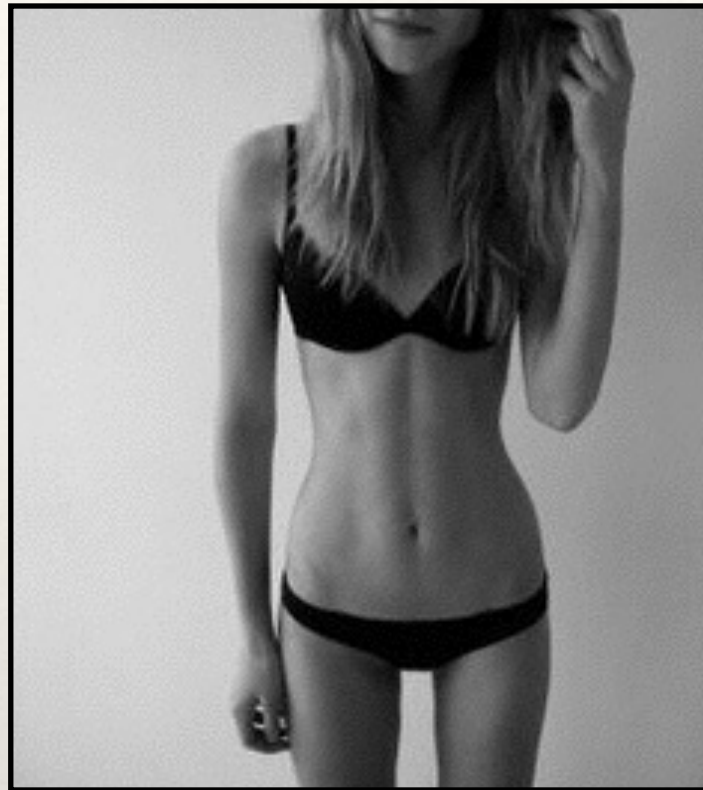
Due to promotion of negative and unhealthy content promoting eating disorders the Pro-Anorexia community is not accepted by mainstream society

- Thinspiration
- Advice on self-starvation
- Pro-Anorexia philosophy and religion



**Desire to be
Thin**

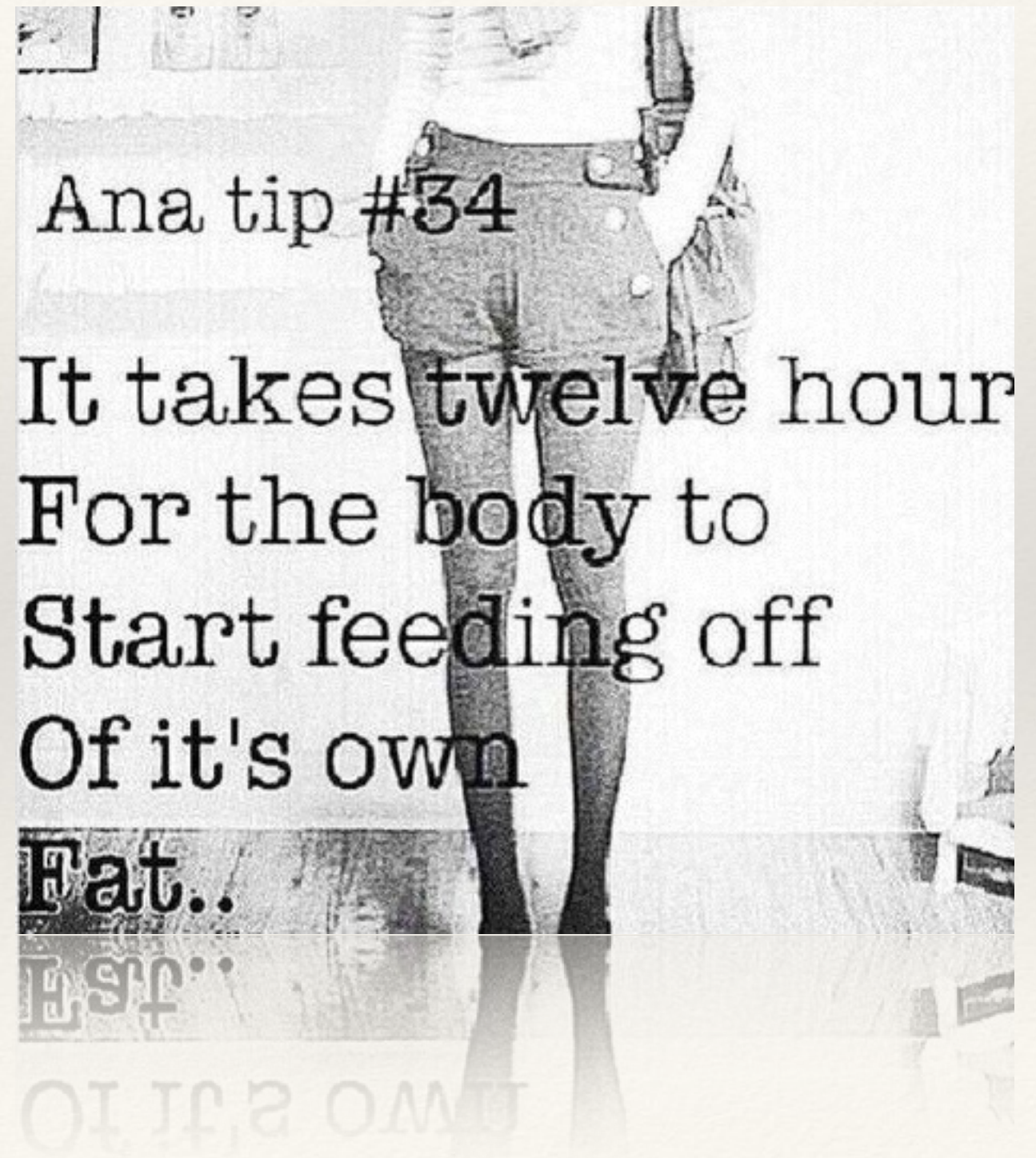
Thinspiration



Pro-Ana Tips and Tricks

Advice on–

- Weight-loss methods
- Dieting
- Binging and purging
- Overexercising
- Hiding eating disorder



Pro-Ana Philosophy and Religion

Anorexia Nervosa as a moral system or set of beliefs

Ana – the personification of AN as a deity or goddess

Popular religious works in the Pro-Ana Community

- Ana's Ten Commandments
- Ana's Creed

The Pro-Ana Community

The heart of the Pro-Anorexia movement – groups of Ana's and other Pro-anorexics that build webpages and communicate with each other online

- Online forums (most common)
- Bulletin boards
- Instant messaging
- Chat rooms



Positives: Acceptance, support, and a sense of belonging

Negatives: Exposure to destructive material, competition, inspiration to continue negative behaviors

Pro-Ana, the Internet, Accessibility, and Anonymity

Due to what the Pro-Anorexia movement stands for, it must exist primarily online

The Internet is a large factor in making the Pro-Anorexia movement successful

- Accessibility: Anyone able to access the internet can access the Pro-Ana community
- Anonymity: Non-identifiability



Addressing Pro-Ana

Anonymity makes it incredibly difficult to address users directly –
websites can be made and deleted easily

Actions taken by *Yahoo!* in August 2001

- All detected Pro-Anorexia sites were deleted
- Was ineffective

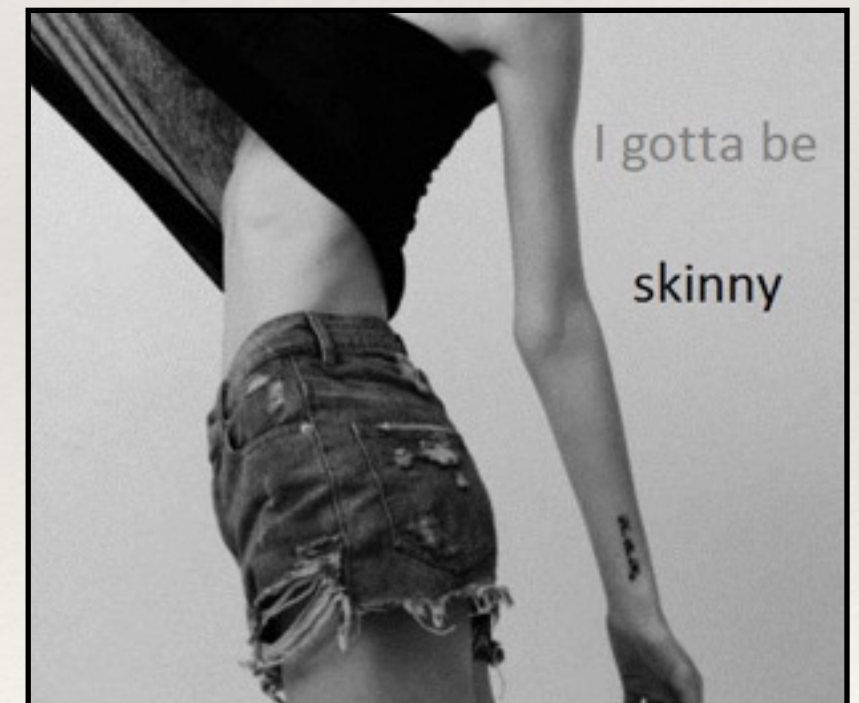
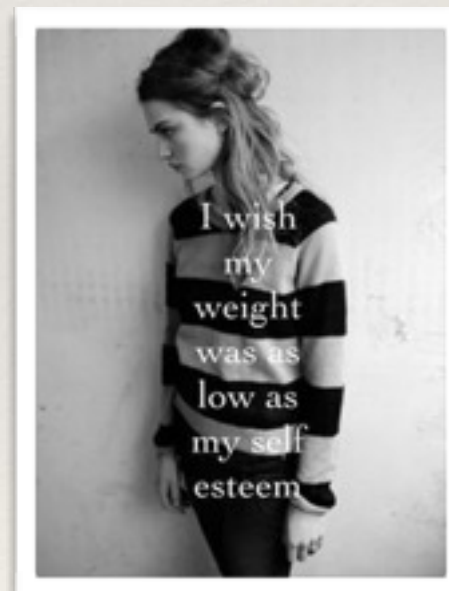
Possible efforts to further address the Pro-Anorexia movement

- Increase public awareness and education
- Heavier monitoring and censoring of the internet

Conclusion

Anonymity is key to the existence and success of the Pro-anorexia movement

- Pro-Ana is also a strong example of how the internet as a tool can be misused•



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¿Questions?

