

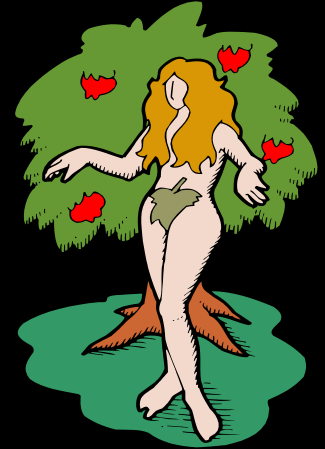
Sacredness and Anorexia Nervosa: An Analysis of Moral Language in Pro-ana Blogs and Poetry



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Anorexia Nervosa (AN) and Moral Behavior

- History of “holy anorexia”
 - medieval practice in which one sought purification through fasting
 - mainly consisted of women
 - compares with modern day anorexia nervosa
 - emphasizes consequences of eating, in pursuit of ideal state through starvation, asceticism



AN and Moral Behavior cont.

- Sacredness and AN
 - Ideational disgust– disgust of material which protects “the soul from harmful influences” (Rozin et al, 1999, p. 431)
 - “individuals with an eating disorder focus on the link between the body being disgusting and, by implication, that the self is therefore disgusting: disgust of the physical transfers to the spiritual.” (Troop & Baker, 2009, p. 234)

Evidence for Ideational Disgust and AN

- AN and BN victims associate self-worth and self-esteem with weight and shape (Fairburn, Shafran & Cooper, 1999)
 - Ex: The Thin Commandments –10. Being thin and not eating are signs of true will power and success
- Pattern of pro-Ana users viewing Ana as superior identity due to greater self-discipline, strength of will, lack of gluttonous behavior in contrast to pro-Mia behavior (Giles, 2006)
 - Ex: “When I was mia I intentionally switched to Ana because mia is so disgusting...”
 - “....I’d always just have been pure ana, and can’t won’t throw up for the life of me. It’s just so dirty and gross” (p.468)

Ideational Disgust and AN cont.



Evidence that people apply socio-moral values to eating behaviors

- Themes pertaining to purity and temptation in food advertising (Griffin & Berry, 2003)
- Magical thinking pertaining to eating food—aka “You are what you eat” (Nemeroff & Rozin, 1989)

Our Research

- Will examine if certain patterns of moral word usage exist on pro-Ana/anorexia blogs and poetry by using Graham and Haidt's (2009) 5 moral dimensions and LIWC dictionary
- Specifically, we are interested if more words pertaining to sacredness (*disgust, purity*) and authority (*control, disobey, defy*) will be present in these sites
- Also, will examine if more words pertain to ingroup loyalty (*loyal, together*) with ana-blogs

Defining Pro-Ana/Anorexia Websites

Some disagreement on the definition of pro-Ana websites, but generally these sites...

- emphasize and advertise grotesquely thin appearances
- advocate intense practices to achieve loss of weight
 - starvation, vomiting, laxatives, excessive exercise, but usually focuses on fasting techniques in contrast to pro-Mia websites (Giles, 2006)
- Viewership of sites correlates with higher body dissatisfaction, eating disturbances (Harper, Sperry & Thompson, 2008), increased perfectionism (Custers & Bulck, 2009), lower self-esteem (Bardone-Cone & Cass, 2006)



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Welcome to Ana Friends



Sampling Procedure

- Will take samples from pro-Ana individual blog entries and medical blog entries pertaining to anorexia nervosa; will also take samples from online pro-Ana poetry and online mental illness poetry
- Will search “pro-Ana blog” under Google, Yahoo, and Bing search engines, survey first 10 pages of results (1st generation), exclude blogs that label themselves as both pro-Ana and pro-Mia or title their blog name with a subject extraneous to pro-Ana, will then take sites that advertise other pro-Ana blogs and include them in the sample (2nd generation sites). Will take first 500 words for sampling convenience

Sampling Procedure II

- For medical blog entries, will search under term “medical blog anorexia nervosa,” under the 3 search engines, looks at first 10 pages of results, exclude entries that are not written by professional medical groups, facilities, or individuals. The sample must be at least 500 words long
- Pro-Ana poetry will be searched under “pro-Ana poetry,” with same three search engines. Poetry that falls under our definition of pro-Ana websites* will be included. We contend that any writing that an author deems as poetry is poetry. The poems must be at least 300 words in length. The first 10 pages from the 3 search engines will be taken, 2nd generation sites will be obtained.

Sampling Procedure III

- For mental illness poems, we will search “mental illness poetry” under the three search engines. The poems must be at least 300 words and cannot be rated or reviewed by users in order to be adequate controls for the free-written, unrated pro-Ana poetry.
- Afterward, we will compile all the samples from the 3 search engines and take out duplicates. Then we will run the samples under the LIWC program, and compare results.

Research Questions

- Will pro-Ana blogs and poetry have more language referring to sacredness, than their controls?
- Will pro-Ana blogs and pro-Ana poetry differ in content regarding in-group loyalty, sacredness, or authority?
 - We suspect that the pro-Ana blogs will have more language referencing in-group loyalty than the poetry because pro-Ana blogs are written specifically for group-oriented themes, while pro-Ana poetry is more descriptive and individualistic

Questions? Suggestions?

