**The Dangers of “Thinspiration”: (Course 2, sociocultural contributors to disordered eating)**

**Caution:** The purpose of this assignment is to explore online messaging that explicitly or implicitly supports the behaviors of disordered eating via content analysis. The assignment is not appropriate for students who are at risk for disordered eating. Please see Tracy Mann’s research (cited in Chapter 12, Course 3 and below).

The goal of this assignment is to conduct a content analysis of online communities that promote eating disorders. This content may include, but is not limited to, pro-eating disorder websites (also called pro-Ana) and “thinspiration” social media posts.

First, operationalize these online communities using the references below. In general terms, these social media accounts and websites use the platform to provide material that supports the progression of the disorder to encourage attitudes and behaviors to achieve terribly low body weight. Use your discretion to determine whether or not it is appropriate to share specific examples in class on the big screen.

Second, describe the purpose of a content analysis, using the Borzekowski et al. (2010) and Juarascio et al. (2010) methods (cited below).

There are several possible outcomes or deliverables for this assignment:

* Students write a hypothesis and design a content analysis to test their hypothesis. A diagram is a useful deliverable to communicate their research design.
  + The most cautious approach is to stop here rather than encouraging data collection to limit student exposure to these sites.
* Alternately, students review already-published content analyses for these websites and propose avenues of secondary prevention, to limit their influence on folks at risk for eating disorders.

**Related references:**

Borzekowski, D.L.G., S. Schenk, J.L. Wilson & R. Peebles (2010), ‘e-Ana and e-Mia: A content analysis of pro-eating disorder web sites’, *AJPH,* 100: 1526-1534.

Juarascio, A.S., A. Shoaib, & C.A. Timko (2010), ‘Pro-eating disorder communities on social networking sites: A content analysis’, *Eating Disorders,* 18: 1-15.

Lewis, S.P. (2012), ‘Searching for thinspiration: The nature of internet searches for pro-eating disorder websites’, *Cyberpsychology, Behavior & Social Networking,* 15(4): 200-204.

Mann, T. et al. (1997), ‘Are two interventions worse than none? Joint primary and secondary prevention of eating disorders in college females’, *Health Psychology,* 16(3): 215-225.