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Is Pinterest Really Killing Feminism?

Lauren E. Alford

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IS PINTEREST REALLY KILLING FEMINISM?

by

LAUREN E. ALFORD

Under the Direction of Mary E. Hocks

ABSTRACT

A response to the notion, popularized by Amy Odell's article "How Pinterest is Killing Feminism," that the social media site Pinterest, which is dominated by female users, is detrimental both to the feminist movement and women in general. A definition of feminism, contrary to the one employed by Odell, is established and applied to Pinterest users and Pinterest content. Two forms of content prevalent on Pinterest, domestic content and "thinspo" images, are evaluated in terms of their prevalence and how they are used on Pinterest and their overall effect on women and feminism. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* are also employed to address Odell's claims that Pinterest content is reminiscent of the "retrograde, materialistic" content in women's magazines.

INDEX WORDS: Pinterest, Feminism, Women's magazines, Thinspo, Tumblr, Domesticity

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by

LAUREN E. ALFORD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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2013

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1 INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has marked an advance in digital communication, perhaps most strongly evidenced by the development and popularity of various social medias. A November 2012 Pew Internet research study revealed, as of August 2012, 69% of adults use social media sites, with 75% of women counting themselves as users of social networks, as opposed to only 63% of men admitting the same. Not only do more women use social networking tools, but women also use social networks more actively, with 54% of them using social networking sites on a typical day, compared with only 42% of men doing the same. While Facebook and Twitter, two social network veterans, continue to dominate the social media landscape, a younger contender has begun to make strides in popularity among Internet users, especially women. In the four short years since its launch in 2009, Pinterest, a virtual scrapbook of sorts, counts 12% of online adults as its users, with nearly one in five (19%) female online adults using the site.

Given the fact most social networking sites are not dominated by a particular gender, Pinterest's female-dominated user pool has given rise to debate and discussion on the causes and implications of these user demographics. Why are women, more so than men, drawn to Pinterest? Like many other social networking sites, the content on Pinterest is both user-generated (or at least user-uploaded) and user-circulated. The site functions as a virtual book-marking tool by which users can collect images and links to content they find on the Internet by uploading them to the site. Each image or link uploaded to Pinterest is created into a "pin," which can be organized by being "pinned," or placed, onto one or more of users' various "pinboards." The social component of the site lies in "repinning" other users' content onto one's own pinboards, "liking" pins, or commenting on pins. Once a pin is posted or repinned onto a pinboard, everyone follow-

ing that particular user or pinboard will see the pin on his or her Pinterest homepage. Pins are created through links to online content or through personal uploads, although most of the content on Pinterest is uploaded by and links to a third party source or website. In this way, although most of the content is created and uploaded (either to the Internet or Pinterest itself) by third party sources (most of them commercial entities), it is Pinterest users that determine the popularity and overall influence of pins via their ability to like and repin.

Unlike most of the content circulated on other popular social networking sites, such as Facebook, Pinterest content is not personal (at least not in the sense that users commonly upload personal pictures and information). Instead, users circulate content—usually products—of which they approve or recommend. Statistics released by the website Repinly, which is a third-party tool for finding “the most popular pins, boards, and pinners on Pinterest,” reveal the most popular pins circulated on the site fall into six of thirty-two categories. These include Food & Drink (11.6%; mostly recipes), DIY (Do-It-Yourself) & Crafts (9.7%), Home Décor (5.9%), Women’s Fashion (5.7%), Hair & Beauty (5.3%), and Weddings (4.6%). While the categories Kids, My Life, Humor, Travel, and Holidays & Events comprise the remainder of the popular pins list, notably absent from the list are categories such as Education, History, Men’s Fashion, Science & Nature, and Sports.

The popularity and prevalence of recipe, craft, home décor, fashion, beauty, and wedding pins on Pinterest and the strong female presence on the site have been actively discussed in online communities since the release of these data over the last year. In October 2012, Amy Odell, writer for the popular news site *BuzzFeed*, posted an article titled “How Pinterest is Killing Feminism.” In her article, Odell claims women’s use of Pinterest, and its resulting popularity, has had a negative effect on feminism and women’s interests. Odell states, “Pinterest’s user-

generated content, which overwhelmingly emphasizes recipes, home decor, and fitness and fashion tips, feels like a reminder that women still seek out the retrograde, materialistic content that women's magazines have been hawking for decades — and that the internet was supposed to help overcome.” Odell cites “thinspo” (images of thin women inspiring an anorexic lifestyle), exercise routines, perfectly airbrushed bodies, diet recipes, and cooking/cleaning tips as examples of content she believes will set women and women's rights back decades. She even equates Pinterest content to porn, stating, “Kitchen porn, cupcake porn, bracelet porn — any kind of eye candy you can think of is probably on Pinterest, waiting for the next Pinner to covet it enough to re-pin it.” Odell questions the validity of Pinterest based on what she believes its users' motivations are in frequenting the site: “People don't go to Pinterest for articles, they go there to scrapbook every imaginable physical aspect of their dream lives, right down to the Mason jar candle holders you really hope to getting around to DIY-ing for your next cocktail party.”

Odell's definition of feminism and judgment of Pinterest content and users' interests has sparked seemingly countless responses from writers, critics, and social media experts across the web. Most responses are in disagreement with Odell's claims, but a select few see validity in them. In an article for Forbes.com, author Victoria Pynchon refers to Pinterest as a “female impersonator,” claiming “it's hard to find business women, feminists, and politics on Pinterest” and the site “looks like the *Ladies' Home Journal* of 1962 or *Good Housekeeping* in 1958.” For Pynchon, the problem with Pinterest can be found through an examination of “the tight gender boundaries” in which the site “frames women's interests.”

Conversely, in her article “The Soapbox: Oh Please, Pinterest Isn't ‘Killing’ Feminism,” Amelia McDonell-Parry combats Odell's claims in referencing the variety of interests the internet, and subsequently Pinterest, promotes and facilitates. McDonell-Parry admits to being a fre-

quent and avid user of Pinterest, not only because she likes the content, but because of its convenience as an organizational tool: “[It] makes it easier to catalog and organize those things which would either clutter up my bookmark bar or get lost. [. . .] In many ways, it’s no different than posting links on Facebook or Twitter, only the experience on Pinterest is more visual and, yeah, looks pretty.” McDonell-Parry begs the question “Is it somehow anti-feminist to like something visually pleasing now? Do I lose real feminist points for every throw pillow I have on my bed?” McDonell-Parry raises an excellent point regarding the conception of feminism and feminists today. Answering the questions raised by McDonell-Parry constitutes the first step in disproving the idea Pinterest is “killing feminism.”

2 NEW CONCEPTIONS OF FEMINISM

Given Odell's objections to Pinterest, it is evident she believes the site undermines feminism. Odell condemns Pinterest's "user-generated content, which overwhelmingly emphasizes recipes, home décor, and fitness and fashion tips," and Pinterest users, who "don't go to Pinterest for articles." In short, Odell believes the content on Pinterest "rehash[es] the same old tropes" that have traditionally characterized femininity in American culture. It is true that many feminists have taken issue with some of these tropes, most notably Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*. In her book, Friedan criticizes ideologies that pressure women to remain full-time housewives and associate domesticity (and all that implies: cooking, cleaning, mothering, etc.) with femininity. At the time of *The Feminine Mystique*'s publication in 1963, Friedan's criticisms of domesticity were appropriate; the majority of stay-at-home women unhappy with their lives felt alone and inadequate because society perpetuated the myth that it was in every woman's nature to be happy when confined solely to the domestic sphere. Friedan writes of the time:

[W]omen were defined only in sexual relation to men—man's wife, sex object, mother, housewife—and never as persons defining themselves by their own actions in society. That image [. . .] was so pervasive, coming at us from women's magazines, the movies, the television commercials, all the mass media and textbooks of psychology and sociology, that each woman thought she was alone, it was her personal guilt, if she didn't have an orgasm waxing the family-room floor. (Friedan 18)

Indeed, the popular opinion in America (and many other places in the world) regarding women's duties could be conveyed in just three words: *kinder*, *kuche*, and *kirche*. The three German words, meaning "children," "kitchen," and "church," respectively, comprise a Nazi slogan which "decreed that women must once again be confined to their biological role" (85).

But times have changed in the fifty years since the publication of Friedan's book, largely due to the women's liberation movement. With access to contraception and abortion, American women today have more control over their life choices than did their counterparts in the first half of the twentieth century. Many women have exercised their right to choose when and if they will have children and, if they do, whether or not they will stay at home full-time or pursue careers outside the home. For those who choose to have children, many women (and men) juggle professional and domestic duties simultaneously. In the final chapter of *The Feminine Mystique*, entitled "New Life Plan," Friedan discourages women from "choos[ing] between marriage and career; that was the mistaken choice of the feminine mystique. In actual fact, it is not as difficult as the feminine mystique implies, to combine marriage and motherhood and even the kind of life-long personal purpose that was once called 'career'" (468-69). Friedan states, "The only way for a woman, as for a man, to find herself, is by creative work of her own" (472). It is evident most women today have heeded the advice of their foremothers—women like Friedan—and pursued their own creative interests. According to Hanna Rosin in her book *The End of Men*, the majority of young women today engage in work for which they are paid. Rosin states, "About 80 percent of women aged twenty-five to fifty-four years old work for pay, and an even higher percentage of female college graduates do" (Rosin 117).

With 80 percent of women engaged in one way or another in the public sphere outside the home, it is hard to imagine society suddenly reverting back to the ideologies that relegated these women's grandmothers and great-grandmothers to the domestic sphere alone. Friedan agrees, "[W]omen are no longer the passive victims they once felt themselves to be. They cannot be pushed back easily into the feminine mystique" (Friedan 21). Why, then, do people like Amy Odell believe women's exposure to domestic content on sites like Pinterest will "kill feminism"

and undo all the efforts of women's liberation? Perhaps it is Odell's conception of feminism and what it entails, and not Pinterest itself, that is the problem. Given Odell's extreme reactions to Pinterest, it is evident she defines feminism and feminists in a constrained, outdated way. Odell believes Pinterest is "killing feminism" because the most popular content on the site is characteristic of domesticity or femininity in the traditional sense of the word. For Odell, being a feminist means completely abandoning the domestic duties and interests that fully characterized women only fifty years ago. It appears Odell is under the assumption that by expressing interest in domesticity, a woman somehow abandons her feminist cause and participates in the perpetuation of patriarchal values. In this way, Odell creates a polarity in which women can only be one thing or another: feminist champions working outside the home and abandoning all domestic duties and interests, or retrograde, dutiful housewives who devote every waking moment of their days to cooking, cleaning, and raising their children.

Odell is not alone in her dualistic ideas of femininity. Many other women (and some men) call themselves feminists but believe they are inadequate because they do not measure up to a certain ideal of what it "truly" means to be a feminist. In her book *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism*, Rebecca Walker references countless women and men she has encountered during speaking engagements who "expressed relief when I told the group there was no one correct way to be a feminist, no seamless narrative to assume and fit into" (Walker xxxi). Having met and spoken with so many people "struggling with the reality of who we are" amidst the "ever-shifting but ever-present ideals of feminism" (xxxii), Walker has determined "[f]or each young woman, there is a different set of qualifiers, a different image which embodies an ideal to measure up to, a far-reaching ideological position to uphold at any cost" (xxxii).

Conceptualizing feminists in such an exclusive manner is actually oppositional to the very precepts on which feminism was built. In their book *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future*, Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards define feminism as “the movement for social, political, and economic equality of men and women” (Baumgardner and Richards 56). Feminists have fought long and hard over the past century for equality among the sexes, but what feminists today cannot afford to ignore is the exclusion of feminist women (primarily by other women) from the feminist cause itself. In *Manifesta*, Baumgardner and Richards write, “By feminists, we mean each and every politically and socially conscious woman or man who works for equality within or outside the movement, writes about feminism, or calls her- or himself a feminist in the name of furthering equality” (54). In this light, what it means to be a feminist should not be exclusive and prescriptive, but rather, inclusive and broadly defined to include anyone working to promote equality. Along these lines, in her article “Pinterest and the Modern Feminist,” Antonia Hayes attacks Odell’s conception of feminists: “Unfortunately what Odell’s article argues is that in order to be a feminist, you need to be a certain kind of woman. [. . .] If you subscribe to her model of feminism, then you must not be interested in recipes, diet, fitness, or fashion.” Hayes also warns, “It’s just as damaging to tell women that they’re killing feminism by liking pretty pictures as it is to tell them that in order to be feminine you must dress, act, look a certain way. It’s the same constricted view, albeit from a different angle. [. . .] We are fortunate that we have the luxury to be able to choose what sort of woman we want to be. Including the freedom to be both a feminist and a connoisseur of cauliflower pizza.” Accordingly, all definitions of femininity should apply, even those involving domestic interests.

3 PINTEREST AS THE NEW WOMEN'S MAGAZINE

With women comprising more than 70% of its user base, it is evident female Internet users dominate the social space of Pinterest. Perhaps this accounts for the prevalence of fashion, beauty, and domestic content—traditionally attributed to women's interests—on the site. But there exists another medium that provides these types of content to their own female-dominated user bases: women's magazines. In her article, Odell equates Pinterest content with “retrograde, materialistic content that women's magazines have been hawking for decades—and that the Internet was supposed to help overcome.” She designates Pinterest as “one big user-curated women's magazine—from the pre-Internet era” and cites other “feminist” websites such as Jezebel and Feministing as “antidote[s] to women's print magazines, which are rife with diet fitness, and dressing tips.”

Odell is not wrong in her criticism of women's magazines. In *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf gives a name to the form of social control resulting in women becoming obsessed with physical perfection at the expense of their confidence and overall well-being. Wolf refers to the models featured in women's magazines as “heroines of adult women's mass culture” (Wolf 61) and perpetrators (along with the publishers and editors who hire them, of course) of the Beauty Myth itself. While one woman Wolf interviews for the book acknowledges, “I'm ashamed to admit that I read them every month” (62), women's magazines nevertheless represent “women's mass culture” (70). In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan criticizes popular women's magazines of the '40s and '50s, such as *Ladies' Home Journal*, for encouraging traditional gender roles relegating women to the private, domestic sphere. But with the revamp of *Cosmopolitan* magazine in 1965, a “new wave” (Wolf 69) of women's magazines began to surface. As opposed

to the domestic and sexually-repressive undertones of previous women's magazines, this new crop of publications began to develop an "aspirational, individualist, can-do tone that [. . .] focus[ed] on personal and sexual relationships [. . .] affirm[ing] female ambition and erotic appetite [. . .] [and] convey[ing] female sexual liberation" (69).

Though the new wave of magazines promoted individual and sexual liberation, they also sold "women the deadliest version of the beauty myth money can buy" with their copious amounts of "diet, skin care, and surgery features" (69). Wolf attributes the inclusion and support of the beauty myth in women's magazines to pressure from advertisers: "Somehow, somewhere, someone must have figured out that [women] will buy more things if they are kept in the self-hating, ever-failing, hungry, and sexually insecure state of being aspiring 'beauties'" (66).

Friedan also attributes the proliferation of the Feminine Mystique to magazine editors and advertisers associating femininity with a woman's ability to dominate the domestic sphere. According to Friedan, women are made to feel unequipped to execute domestic duties. With insecurity comes the innate human desire to change for the better, and advertisers offer products—for a price, of course—that can remedy the "problems" they themselves have created. The result, in Friedan's case, is a magazine offering cleaning tips and advertisements for top-of-the-line domestic appliances and, in Wolf's case, a magazine comprised in part of advertisements perpetuating the Beauty Myth with the rest of the magazine featuring editorial content that is mostly positive and encouraging but can sometimes be advertiser-influenced. Accordingly, in order to avoid "run[ning] [their magazines] aground, losing the bulk [of their] advertisers," editors must "follow the formula that works [and avoid] providing what many readers claim they want: imagery that includes them, features that don't talk down to them, reliable consumer reporting" (83-84). The problem for the reader, then, becomes deciphering the varied messages thrown at her and deter-

mining which message she will ultimately internalize. Unfortunately, as Wolf argues, “the relationship between the reader and her magazine doesn’t happen in a context that encourages her to analyze how the message is affected by the advertisers’ needs. It is emotional, confiding, defensive, and unequal: ‘the link binding readers to their magazine, the great umbilical, as some call it, the trust’” (74).

But the characteristics of women’s magazines that have made them detrimental to women are actually what make Pinterest as a female-dominated, mass media space so appealing. Unlike print magazines, Pinterest does not employ editors to determine the content to which women should be exposed. Instead, users make this determination by creating pins of the content they enjoy reading or are relevant to their lives or the lives of their friends and followers. Users are not motivated by advertising quotas; instead, they are motivated by their own needs and interests. As opposed to the editor-curated content of print magazines, Pinterest users are exposed to user-curated content, designed specifically by and for themselves. A user can choose whom she would like to follow, and only posts by those whom she chooses to follow appear in her feed. Additionally, if a user cannot find the content she desires in her feed, she can easily search or browse for it. Any content relevant to the user can be liked or repined for future reference and for the benefit of those following the user. In this way, the former *reader* is truly transformed into a *user*. Instead of simply consuming information, she is actively seeking out, consuming, and curating content. And as a result of the active roles the Pinterest user takes on, she does not develop “the great umbilical” link binding her to the site itself. The user becomes more critical and more determined to find content that appeals to her own specific interests as opposed to blindly consuming whatever content is placed in front of her.

In light of this shift emphasizing the user, Pinterest remains a website comprised of many different users with varied interests. Consequently, the site features a myriad number of categories of content. If something is on the Internet, it can also be uploaded to (and is probably already on) Pinterest. Unavoidably, the site features some content that may be deemed controversial by or unfavorable to some of its users. “Kitchen porn” (named by Odell and referring to domestic content such as recipes and cleaning tips) and “thinspo” (short for “thinspiration”) are two examples.

3.1 “Kitchen Porn”

3.1.1 The Root of Domestic Content: The Feminine Mystique

Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* has long been characterized as the catalyst for change that sparked the women’s liberation movement following its publication in 1963. One of the many reasons attributed to the book’s success is Friedan’s identification and naming of a problem many stay-at-home American housewives were experiencing. This problem was unhappiness, a sense of un-fulfillment with their lives as full-time wives and mothers. According to Friedan, many women’s sense of un-fulfillment in their lives can be attributed to the Feminine Mystique, or the idea that “the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity” (Friedan 91). At the time Friedan’s book was published, femininity was culturally defined as “find[ing] fulfillment only in sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love” (92). For most women, femininity was fulfilled in their roles as housewives, outside of the public sphere.

The cultural correlation between femininity and domesticity was perhaps fueled most strongly by advertisers and editors of women’s magazines. In *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan cites a 1945 survey conducted by the publisher of a leading women’s magazine: “A woman’s

attitude toward housekeeping appliances cannot be separated from her attitude toward homemaking in general” (301). Not only does the correlation between femininity and domesticity reflect cultural ideologies of the time, it also lies at the crux of many advertisers’ marketing campaigns. Friedan explains, “Properly manipulated[,] [. . .] American housewives can be given the sense of identity, purpose, creativity, the self-realization, even the sexual joy they lack—by the buying of things” (301). This idea was not lost on advertisers, who invested in expensive and thorough studies in order to determine the best ways by which to convince women to buy their products. Many of these studies identified three categories of American women in the domestic market: “True Housewives,” “Career Women,” and “Balanced Homemakers.” The True Housewives comprised “the largest market for appliances” and they took “the utmost pride and satisfaction in maintaining a comfortable and well-run home for [their] famil[ies] [with] little, if any, desire for a position outside the home” (302). In contrast, the Career Woman “was a minority, but an extremely ‘unhealthy’ one from the sellers’ standpoint” due to the fact that she “do[es] not believe that a woman’s place is primarily in the home” (302). The Career Women were also described as “not the ideal type of customer. *They are too critical.*” (302). The most ideal type of women for advertisers was the Balanced Homemakers because, as women who may have worked outside the home before becoming homemakers, they have “outside interests” and “‘readily accept’ the help mechanical appliances can give—but ‘do not expect them to do the impossible’ because [they] need to use [their] own executive ability ‘in managing a well-run household’” (303). The Balanced Homemakers were identified as “the market with the greatest future potential” and advertisers were encouraged to “educate them through advertising” that “the art of good homemaking should be the goal of every normal woman” (303). As a result, women were convinced “the only way the young housewife was supposed to express herself, and not feel guilty about it, was

in buying products for the home-and-family” (319), engaging in something Friedan names “the sexual sell” (326). Expressing her frustration with the fact these advertisers believed “the great majority of American women have no ambition other than to be housewives” (326), Friedan writes, “Like a primitive culture which sacrificed little girls to its tribal gods, we sacrifice our girls to the feminine mystique, grooming them ever more efficiently through the sexual sell to become consumers of the things to whose profitable sale our nation is dedicated” (330).

3.1.2 New Conceptions of Domesticity

As a result of Friedan’s book, now fifty years after its initial publication, many of society’s notions regarding women’s femininity and place in the public, professional sphere have changed. In a foreword to a new edition of her book, dated 1997, Friedan writes, “[A]ccording to the latest figures, American men are doing 40 percent of the housework and childcare” (28). Accordingly, in her book *The End of Men*, Hanna Rosin states that while “[i]n 1970 women in the United States contributed to 2 to 6 percent of the family,” today “the average American wife contributes 42.2 percent” (Rosin 48). Additionally, more than a third of American mothers “are the family’s main breadwinner, either because they are single or because they make more money than their husbands” (48). These figures are reflective of a shift in the cultural perception of women and their abilities outside the home. This shift was most strongly evident in 2009 when “for the first time in American history, the balance of the workforce tipped toward women, who continue to hover around 50 percent” (117).

With 80 percent of young women engaging in professions outside the home, many couples have traded traditional domestic partnerships for what Rosin refers to as the “seesaw marriage.” In the seesaw marriage, “[c]ouples are not chasing justice and fairness as measured by some external yardstick of gender equality. What they are after is individual self-fulfillment, and

each partner can have a shot at achieving it at different points in the marriage” (67). For couples that choose to engage in seesaw marriages, roles change at various points in the partnership. One spouse may work while the other attends school and manages the household. Once the student graduates and enters the workforce, the other spouse may cut back at work and begin managing the household. Or both spouses may work outside the home, hire a nanny for their children, and split domestic duties equally. Or one spouse may work outside the home while the other stays home to raise the children. The possibilities in seesaw marriages are endless, but what persists in every seesaw marriage is a disregard for traditional gender roles and an emphasis on whatever choices and arrangements work best for each person in the partnership.

Seesaw marriages and the prevalence of women in the workforce have undoubtedly lifted some—if not most—of the domestic burden from women’s shoulders. With American men performing, on average, 40 percent of household duties, women no longer fully comprise the domestic-buyer demographic. While most advertising campaigns featuring domestic products do not reflect this shift in the relegation of household duties among married couples and continue to feature mostly women, there are a select few advertisements that have targeted stay-at-home dads by featuring men. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 are two examples.



DREW BREES
New Orleans Saints Quarterback

**WHEN THEY BREATHE EASIER
SO CAN YOU.**

Vicks VapoRub. Starts working instantly to soothe coughs for easier breathing.



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All other NFL-related trademarks are trademarks of the National Football League. NFL PLAYERS is a trademark of National Football League Players Incorporated.

 
Official Sponsor of the NFL

Figure 3.1: Vicks VapoRub Advertisement



Figure 3.2: O-Cedar ProMist Mop Advertisement

Figure 3.1 features NFL quarterback Drew Brees in an advertisement for Vicks VapoRub. As a professional football player, Brees is recognized and respected by many American men. The advertisement in which Brees appears is part of Vicks' "Equal Rights for Dads" campaign by which Vicks attempts to recognize dads as established caretakers within the home. Figure 3.2 features professional bodybuilder Lou Ferrigno in an advertisement for the O-Cedar ProMist mop. Ferrigno actually created the advertisement himself in an attempt to win a challenge while appearing on the popular television series *Celebrity Apprentice*. Not only does the advertisement feature Ferrigno, a man, performing the household chore of mopping, the slogan "I'm gonna mop the floor with you" associates cleaning with masculinity, refuting the previously-held notion domesticity is feminine and thereby making household duties more appealing to men. While advertisements for domestic products featuring men are becoming more prevalent, most of them consist of celebrity endorsements by male public figures and they are far outnumbered by advertisements featuring women.

3.1.3 Domesticity on Pinterest

In “How Pinterest is Killing Feminism,” Odell expresses concern at the abundance of recipes and cleaning tips on Pinterest. With 11.6% of the most popular pins on Pinterest, Food and Drink is the most popular of the thirty-two categories of Pinterest content (Repinly). Many of these pins feature food and drink recipes, links to food and wine blogs, ingredient alternatives, and specialty recipes, such as organic, gluten-free, peanut-free, low-carb (low in carbohydrates), etc. But while there is a variety of food and drink content on Pinterest, Odell dismisses the site because most of the pinned recipes she viewed were “diet ones” (Odell). Odell cites a “shockingly popular” recipe for “[p]izza crust made with crumbled cauliflower as a low-carb alternative to dough” as one example of the recipes conducive to low-carb diets on Pinterest. Figure 3.3 is an image of the pin to which Odell refers in her article.

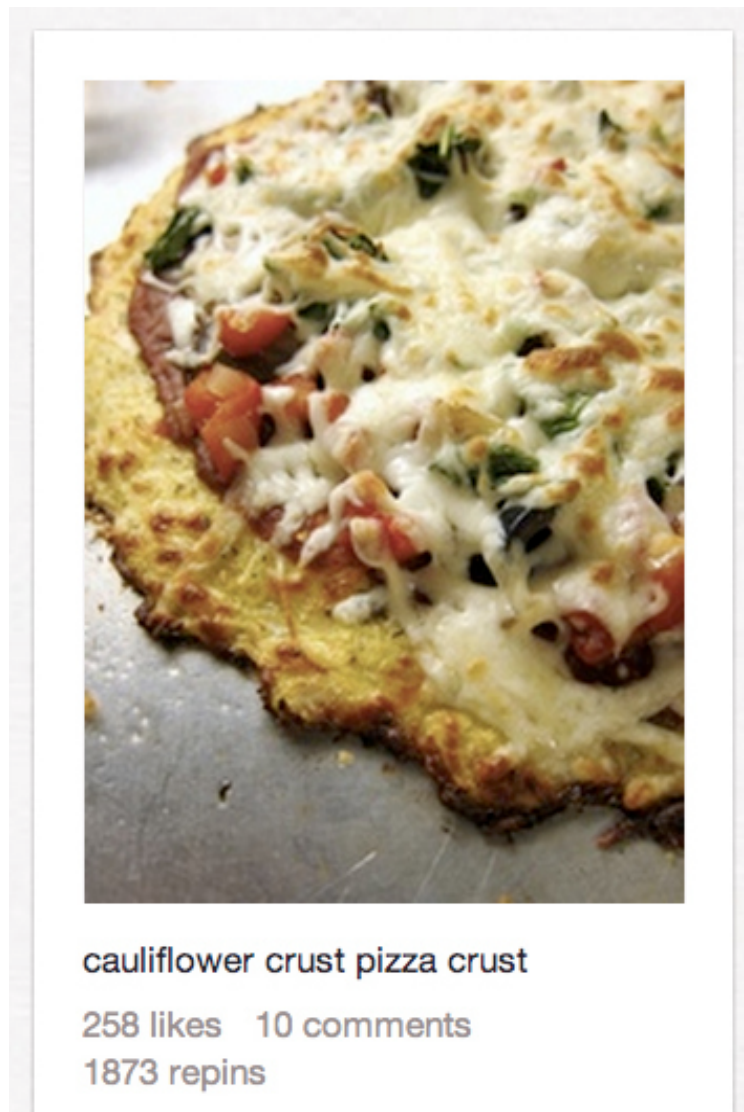


Figure 3.3: “Cauliflower Pizza Crust” Recipe Pin

Throughout her article, Odell continues to allude to the “overwhelming” amount of diet recipes on Pinterest, yet a basic search on Pinterest using the term “recipe” yields results primarily consisting of full-fat dessert recipes. This is evident in Figure 3.4.

recipe

Pinterest

Add + About ▾ Lauren ▾

Pins · Boards · Pinners — search results for **recipe** Like 9

Carrot Cake Bread Recipe
4 likes 34 repins
Ariene @FlourOnMyFace.com onto #Spring Fling

5 MINUTE cinnamon roll recipe
recipe for cinnamon rolls
13 likes 1 comment 72 repins
Vanessa | Tried & True onto Creative Ideas from Moms
Connie Ott (MiscFinds4u.com) Looks so delicious!
Add a comment...
Comment

Cinnamon Roll Bunnies Recipe
3 likes 31 repins
Key Ingredient onto Spring and Easter

Hot Rum & Ginger Tea Toddy Recipe
7 likes 32 repins
ZipList onto Snow Day Favorites

White Chocolate Peppermint Fudge Recipe
17 likes 71 repins
Key Ingredient onto Chocolate and Chocolatier Lovers -- It's All About

Easy Sugar Cookies Recipe
26 likes 139 repins
Food2Fork onto Food2Fork

mini chocolate bundt cakes
missjdeordesigns.com

Figure 3.4: Pinterest Recipe Search

Additionally, in the “recipe” search, while some of the pins had nutritional considerations, such as “gluten-free,” none of the pins generated explicitly labeled any of the recipes as “diet.” Although there are some occasional “diet” recipe pins that make their way onto my feed, the majority of recipe pins I see on Pinterest do not encourage or facilitate diets. Perhaps the people I follow and the search terms I employ are different than those whom Odell follows and the search terms she uses. But if diet content truly is so prevalent on Pinterest that it is encouraging users to begin unhealthy or unnecessary diet routines, why does this content seem to be so outnumbered by regular recipes?

While cleaning tips and other domestic content do abound on Pinterest, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how these pins are harmful to women. Many of these pins seem harmless; most of them are environmentally friendly (Figure 3.5), conducive to time-restraints (Figure 3.6), or encourage fun and family bonding (Figure 3.7).



Figure 3.5: “Natural Cleaning” Pin



Figure 3.6: “Busy Woman's Guide to Clean” Pin



5 Ways to Make Spring Cleaning Fun!

16 repins

Figure 3.7: “5 Ways to Make Spring Cleaning Fun” Pin

Even though the division of household labor has evolved and changed along gender lines over the past five decades, chores are still a requirement of every well-maintained household. With the increasing number of families with both husband and wife working outside home, it has become imperative that chores be executed in the most timely and organized ways possible. Pinterest is a phenomenal resource for finding the most productive ways to cook healthily and clean efficiently. While Odell views this readily available domestic content as being harmful to women’s aspirations outside the home, it is actually conducive to women’s goals because it provides them with easily accessible, time-tested content that demonstrates how to more efficiently juggle their professional and domestic duties while remaining environmentally conscious. Just as

the prevalence of domestic advertisements featuring women (as opposed to men) has not hindered the progress of women in professional spheres over the past fifty years, domestic content on Pinterest will certainly not encourage women to abandon their aspirations in order to replicate a recipe or try one of six strategies for spot-cleaning a rug.

3.2 “Thinspiration”

3.2.1 *The Root of Thinspo: The Beauty Myth*

Another of Odell’s problems with Pinterest is the prevalence of “thinspo,” short for “thinspiration,” images on the site. In her *Time* article “Thinterest? When Social Networks and Body Image Collide,” Megan Gibson defines thinspiration as “consist[ing] of photos, tips and angst-ridden quotes meant to provide visual inspiration and motivation for those looking to whittle their bodies down to tinier proportions. With a disturbing similarity to pro-anorexia websites, thinspo typically consists of photos of female bodies with pencil-thin arms and jutting ribs.” Thinspo images featuring gaunt models can stand alone, but many of them are accompanied by text meant to convey emotion or incite motivation in the viewer. Figure 3.8 is a popular thinspo image and also the third result when searching for the term “thinspo” on Google Image Search.



Figure 3.8: Thinspo from Google Images

The phrases “Not eating light makes your clothes too tight;” “Hunger pangs are fat leaving the body;” “The thinner is the winner;” “A pleasure to the lips adds pounds to the hips;” and “An imperfect body reflects an imperfect person” are all common thinspo motivators. These motivators, displayed alongside an image of a stick-thin model, offer a glimpse into the experience of a woman who creates and consumes this type of content. One cannot help but relate the experience of a viewer of these images to that of a reader of women’s magazines. One such reader related her experiences with women’s magazines to Wolf, who published the account in *The Beauty Myth*:

I buy [magazines] [. . .] as a form of self-abuse. They give me a weird mixture of anticipation and dread, a sort of stirred-up euphoria. Yes! Wow! I can be better starting from right this minute! Look at her! Look at *her*! But right afterward, I feel like throwing out all my clothes and everything in my refrigerator and telling my boyfriend never to call me again and blowtorching my whole life. I’m ashamed to admit that I read them every month. (Wolf 62)

The combination of body hatred and inclination toward changing “for the better” is most strongly expressed when a photograph and text are joined together. Whatever a viewer does not internalize from an image alone can most certainly be articulated textually. And while thinspo images are manifestations of an extremely body-conscious culture, they also shed some light on the underlying messages embedded within the Beauty Myth. The phrase “I don’t care if it hurts; I want to have control. I want a perfect body; I want a perfect soul” indicates many women’s desire to seize control of their lives by obtaining a “perfect body,” even at the expense of their health and well-being. The inclusion of the term “perfect soul” here demonstrates, for most women obsessed with thinness, obtaining a “perfect body” will somehow result in a better person. In her book *Fat is a Feminist Issue*, Susie Orbach confirms these irrational associations are common and frequently reinforced in American culture: “Success, beauty, wealth, love, sexuality

and happiness are promoted as attached to and depending on slimness. Slimness instantly conveys these qualities as though they automatically go together. [. . .] [S]limness is made into a fetish and abstracted from what it is – just one particular body shape. Slimness sells women’s bodies back to them, promising in its wake the good life” (Orbach 200-01).

The process of “sell[ing] women’s bodies back to them” is explicated by Wolf in her own book. She explains that following “the second wave of women’s advancement sparked by Friedan’s book,” the “housewife market” (Wolf 66) began to decline as a result of shifts in women’s ideas regarding their personal and professional lives. As a result, the \$33-billion thinness industry and the \$20-billion youth industry¹ emerged to take the place of the declining housewife industry. It was through the efforts of magazines and advertisers attempting to survive the “economic fallout of the women’s revolution” (66) that the Beauty Myth was born. Writes Wolf, “The Feminine Mystique evaporated; *all that was left was the body*. [. . .] Women’s sense of liberation from the older constraints of fashion was countered by a new and sinister relationship to their bodies” (67). In 1969, women’s fashion magazine *Vogue* introduced the Nude Look. As opposed to emphasizing clothing, which suggested “the older constraints of fashion” in which women were no longer interested, *Vogue* began focusing on women’s bodies. Wolf explains the process: “Striped of their old expertise, purpose, and advertising hook, the magazines invented—almost completely artificially—a new one. In a stunning move, an entire replacement culture was developed by naming a ‘problem’ where it had scarcely existed before, centering it on women’s natural state, and elevating it to *the* existential female dilemma” (67). Accordingly, from 1968 to 1972, the number of diet-related articles published in *Vogue* increased by 70 percent. A ripple effect ensued as other publications followed suit and the number of diet-related

¹ Figures as of 1991 when *The Beauty Myth* was published.

articles in the popular press ballooned from 60 total in 1979 to 66 in just the month of January 1980 alone (Wolf).

3.2.2 Thinspo on the Internet: Pinterest and Tumblr

So began the movement that, in order to counter the progressiveness of women's liberation, would make women prisoners of their own bodies. As a result of the Beauty Myth and the ideologies it perpetuates, an estimated 24 million people in the United States suffer from eating disorders, which have "the highest mortality rate of any mental illness" ("Eating Disorder Statistics"). In their article "Starving for Support: How Women with Anorexia Receive 'Thinspiration' on the Internet," Jennifer Curry and Shannon Ray explain the process by which people with eating disorders and extremely negative views about their bodies utilize the Internet. According to Curry and Ray, the Internet has become a hub for those struggling with body issues because it "offers previously unimagined opportunities that allow socially stigmatized, ostracized, or otherwise isolated individuals to connect with others" (Curry and Ray 362). Because many women who suffer from eating disorders feel compelled to hide their disease from their families and friends in order to avoid interventions and hospitalization, the disease can be very isolating. Many victims of the disease create or seek out "pro-ana"—short for "proanorexia"—websites in order to find motivation and connect with others undergoing similar struggles. These websites, written by and for women with body issues, usually employ "a tone of empowerment and a voice of elite superiority, suggesting that participants and site members are a unique group of highly disciplined achievers who have accomplished a great goal by becoming anorexic" (362). This tone especially appeals to victims with low self-esteem or self-worth who are likely to "find this positive reinforcement to be personally affirming" (362). However, due to the "isolating nature of the Internet" (362), these sites actually hinder more than help victims of eating disorders by

providing them with a “cultural falseness” (362) regarding their conditions. These sites foster, support, and encourage sustaining behaviors related to body criticism and eating disorders by providing victims with “formulas for calculating body mass, monitoring basal metabolic rate, caloric counters, dietary planners, the number of calories burned per hour for sports and informal activities, advice on how to avoid eating, which foods are ‘safe’ to eat (such as celery and egg whites), how to hide the eating disorder from family and friends, and information on using diuretics, caffeine, and laxatives” (363). Curry and Ray assert the Internet, when used in this way, “is a communication medium that allows the individual to construct and sustain an identity that holds the eating disorder in a place of centrality for the individual and that discourages mutuality of relationships with family and friends outside of the virtual environment” (363).

While most sites offer “tips [that] promote the day-to-day logistical execution of anorexic behavior,” more than 90% of the sites use “visual images of persons with anorexia and desperately thin actresses and models to promote and encourage anorexic behavior” (363). These visual images of real-life eating disorder victims (many of them famous people) have come to be known as “thinspo,” and they serve as an integral driving force behind many pro-ana communities. Because Pinterest users aggregate content from all over the Internet, many thinspo images have made their way onto the site. But it is important to note that most thinspo content does not originate on Pinterest. Nor does Pinterest’s visually-dominant interface allow for the expression of pro-ana tips and tricks many other social media sites offer. And yet Odell attributes the proliferation of body-conscious imagery and the subsequent “death of feminism” to Pinterest, when in fact, there are many other spaces online that both create and sustain these disorders in a much more dangerous fashion. One of the places from which thinspo images are uploaded to Pinterest is Tumblr, described as an “image-laden micro-blogging platform popular with teenagers” (Gre-

goire) by Carolyn Gregoire in her article “The Hunger Blogs: A Secret World of Teenage ‘Thinspiration.’” According to Gregoire, between 30 and 50 percent of teenage patients at a Chicago eating-disorder treatment center “actively use social media to support their eating disorders” and many of them use Tumblr for the sole purpose of “los[ing] extreme and unhealthy amounts of weight.” Like Pinterest, Tumblr has experienced prodigious growth since its launch in 2007, due in part to the “diary-like feel of its blogs.” In 2011, Tumblr “generated roughly 15 billion pageviews and attracted 120 million unique visitors each month” with many of these users utilizing the blogging platform as an outlet for their eating disorders. Many writers of pro-ana and thinspo blogs display their starting weight, current weight, ultimate goal weight, and height at the top of their blog pages so that they can track and display their weight loss to readers. Diet and fitness tips accompanied by thinspo images are also common. Figures 3.9-3.13 appear on Tumblr user Ashleysadventuresinwonderland’s thinspo blog and are representative of typical thinspo images.

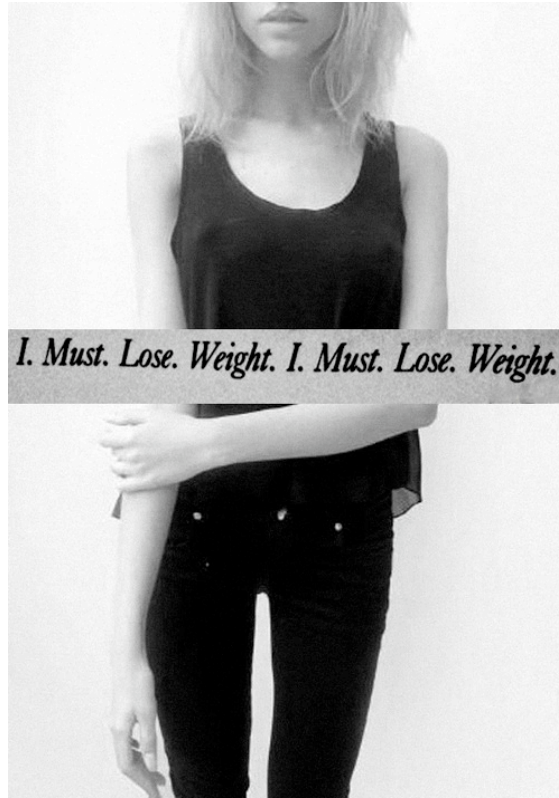


Figure 3.9: "I Must Lose Weight" Thinspo from Tumblr



Figure 3.10: "Criticize" Thinspo from Tumblr



Figure 3.11: Scale Messages Thinspo from Tumblr

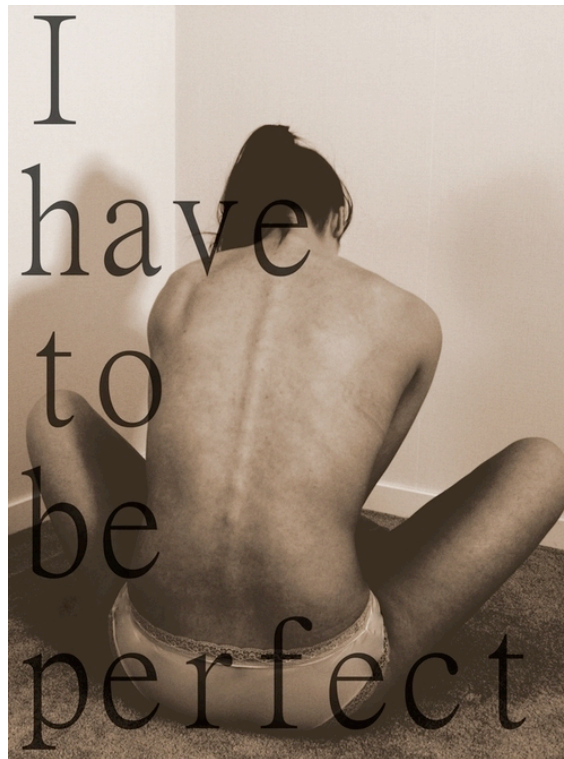


Figure 3.12: "I Have to Be Perfect" Thinspo from Tumblr



Figure 3.13: "I Hate My Thighs" Thinspo from Tumblr

Figure 3.9 can best be described as the essential mantra of thinspo images. “I must lose weight. I must lose weight,” is a recurring message in almost all thinspo images. Figures 3.10 and 3.11 articulate the messages many users who seek out thinspo hear or believe they hear from the family members, friends, and media to which they are exposed. Figures 3.12 and 3.13 are more self-deprecating in nature. What is most striking about Figure 3.13 is the juxtaposition of the phrase “I hate my thighs” with the photograph of a young woman’s upper legs. Nothing apparent in the image seems to indicate the woman should “hate” her legs: they are not scarred, nor bruised, nor medically obese. Not only does the image convey the woman’s dissatisfaction with her legs, it also indicates a possible case of body dysmorphia, a mental illness in which a person believes her body or parts of her body are defective, even when they are not. Not all of the above thinspo images feature actual bodies, but they all express the blogger’s desire to lose weight while simultaneously indicating her inner turmoil with herself and her body.

Perhaps due to the fact Pinterest primarily features web-aggregated content (as opposed to the personally-uploaded content more prevalent on Tumblr blogs), thinspo images on Pinterest

tend to feature more well-known celebrities and models. Additionally, because a high concentration of commercial images are used to create these types of thinspo, the images have a more professional, and perhaps subsequently, a more official and authoritative tone. Figures 3.14-3.16 are popular thinspo images on Pinterest.



#thinspo

4 likes 19 repins

Figure 3.14: Victoria's Secret Thinspo from Pinterest

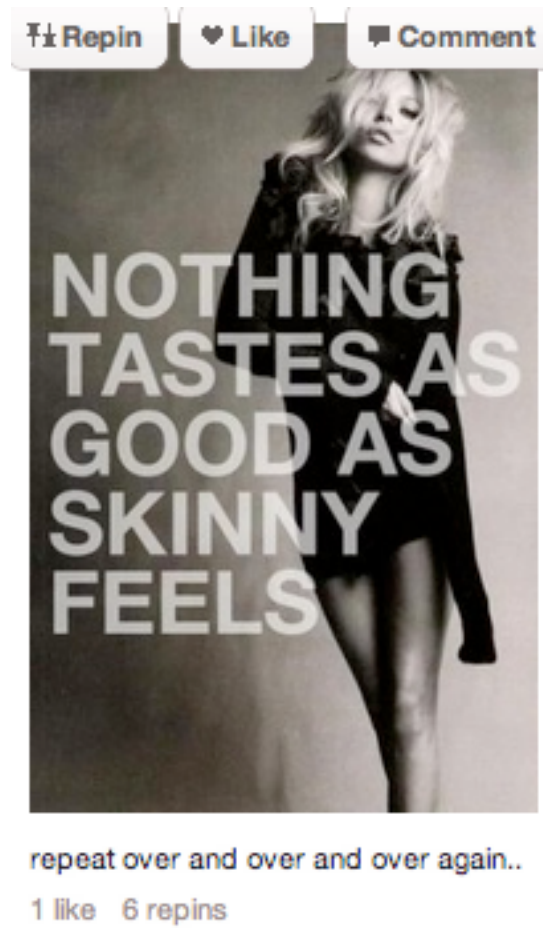


Figure 3.15: "Nothing Tastes as Good as Skinny Feels" Thinspo from Pinterest



kate moss

2 likes 1 comment 10 repins

Figure 3.16: "I Beat Obesity" Thinspo from Pinterest

Figure 3.14 features a model for the popular lingerie brand Victoria's Secret. Victoria's Secret models have become idols in pro-ana and thinspo communities and are regularly idealized as having perfect faces and bodies. Figure 3.15 features fashion supermodel Kate Moss, who became the poster child for thinspo after being quoted as saying, "Nothing tastes as good as skinny feels." Figure 3.16 is also an image of Moss, who poses quite ironically in a T-shirt reading, "I beat obesity." But funny as the T-shirt may seem to anyone intelligent enough to understand Kate Moss has never come close to being obese (or even close to attaining a healthy weight for someone in her height bracket, for that matter), her T-shirt expresses a victory over something that many women with eating disorders are perpetually afraid they will fall victim to: becoming extremely fat.

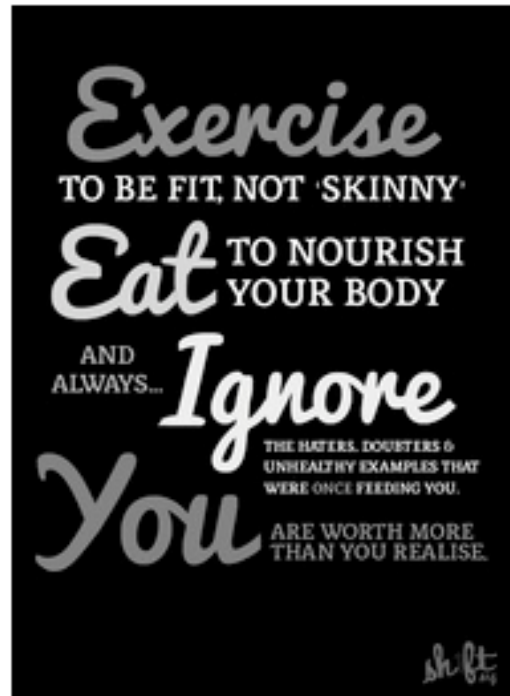
It is worth noting that while there are a fair amount of thinspo images available on Pinterest, there are also many images that condemn thinspo themes and instead promote healthy bodies and body image. Many of these images have common thinspo tags attached to them (such as “thinspo,” “thinspiration,” “anorexic,” etc.) so that they appear as results in searches when these terms are used. Figures 3.17 and 3.18 are two examples.



Nothing tastes as good as healthy
feels!!!

1 repin

Figure 3.17: "Nothing Tastes as Good as Healthy Feels" Anti-Thinspo from Pinterest



as I am not a fan of the "Nothing tastes as good as skinny feels" theme that seems to be sweeping through women's minds lately. I am going to live by a different motto

9 repins

Figure 3.18: "You are Worth More Than You Realize" Anti-Thinspo from Pinterest

Figure 3.17 is an adaptation of the popular Kate Moss thinspo image seen in Figure 3.15. In Figure 3.17, the user has crossed out the word “skinny” and replaced it with “healthy” so that the quotation reads, “Nothing tastes as good as healthy feels.” This change from “skinny” to “healthy” shifts the focus from changing one’s body in order to attain a popular standard of beauty—which may be harmful or impossible to achieve—to changing one’s body in order to live longer and more healthfully, which for most women, is a more attainable goal. Figure 3.18 was posted by a Pinterest user claiming, “[A]s I am not a fan of the ‘Nothing tastes as good as skinny feels’ theme that seems to be sweeping through women’s minds lately[,] I am going to

live by a different motto.” This motto is similar in message to the changing of “skinny” to “healthy” in Figure 3.17. The motto in Figure 3.18 reads, “Exercise to be fit, not skinny; Eat to nourish your body; and Always ignore the haters, doubters, and unhealthy examples that were once feeding you. You are worth more than you reali[z]e.” This new motto can be described as the complete antithesis of the messages thinspo transmits. As opposed to body image, health is prioritized, and as opposed to internalizing and being affected by media images and others’ opinions, a recognition of one’s inherent and unique self-worth is suggested. Figures 3.17 and 3.18, and the many other anti-thinspo images like them, are evidence that, while there is content on Pinterest that may encourage and intensify the inclination in women to be critical of their bodies, there is also content on Pinterest that attempts to combat these efforts and instead assist women in developing healthy conceptions of themselves and their bodies.

3.2.3 Monitoring Thinspo Online

As a result of the prevalence of pro-ana websites and blogs featuring thinspo content, the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders “requested safeguarding strategies to be used by Web servers as enforcement of proclamations of concern for the health and safety of children and adolescent web users” (Curry and Ray 363). As a result, the sites “are supposed to be monitored for appropriate content based on the regulations and parameters of Web providers” (363). However, given the sheer volume of content on the Internet and continuous stream of new technologies, codes, and hacks being used in cyberspace, it has become increasingly difficult to regulate harmful content. In March 2012, Pinterest sent a mass email to all its users informing them of an update to their Acceptable Use Policy. The policy was updated to prohibit users from posting content that “creates a risk of harm, loss, physical or mental injury, emotional distress, death, disability, disfigurement, or physical or mental illness to yourself, to

any other person, or to any animal” (Pinterest “Acceptable Use Policy”).² Tumblr also took action, creating a “New Policy Against Self-Harm Blogs.” Like Pinterest’s “Acceptable Use Policy,” Tumblr’s new policy prohibits users from “post[ing] content that actively promotes or glorifies self-injury or self-harm” (“New Policy Against Self-Harm Blogs”). Additionally, Tumblr announced a “plan to start posting ‘public service announcement’-style language whenever users search for tags that typically go along with pro-self-harm blogs.” According to Tumblr, these terms include “‘anorexia,’ ‘anorexic,’ ‘bulimia,’ ‘bulimic,’ ‘thinspiration,’ ‘thinspo,’ ‘proana,’ ‘purge,’ ‘purging,’ etc.”³ However, when I searched the terms “thinspo,” “thinspiration,” “anorexic,” and “bulimic” using Tumblr’s search tool, no public service announcement or public service announcement-style language appeared. On the other hand, Pinterest’s search engine did generate a public service announcement when I searched these terms, as is evident in Figure 3.19.

² Pinterest’s full Acceptable Use Policy can be viewed in Appendix A of this document.

³ Tumblr’s full New Policy Against Self-Harm Blogs can be viewed in Appendix B of this document.

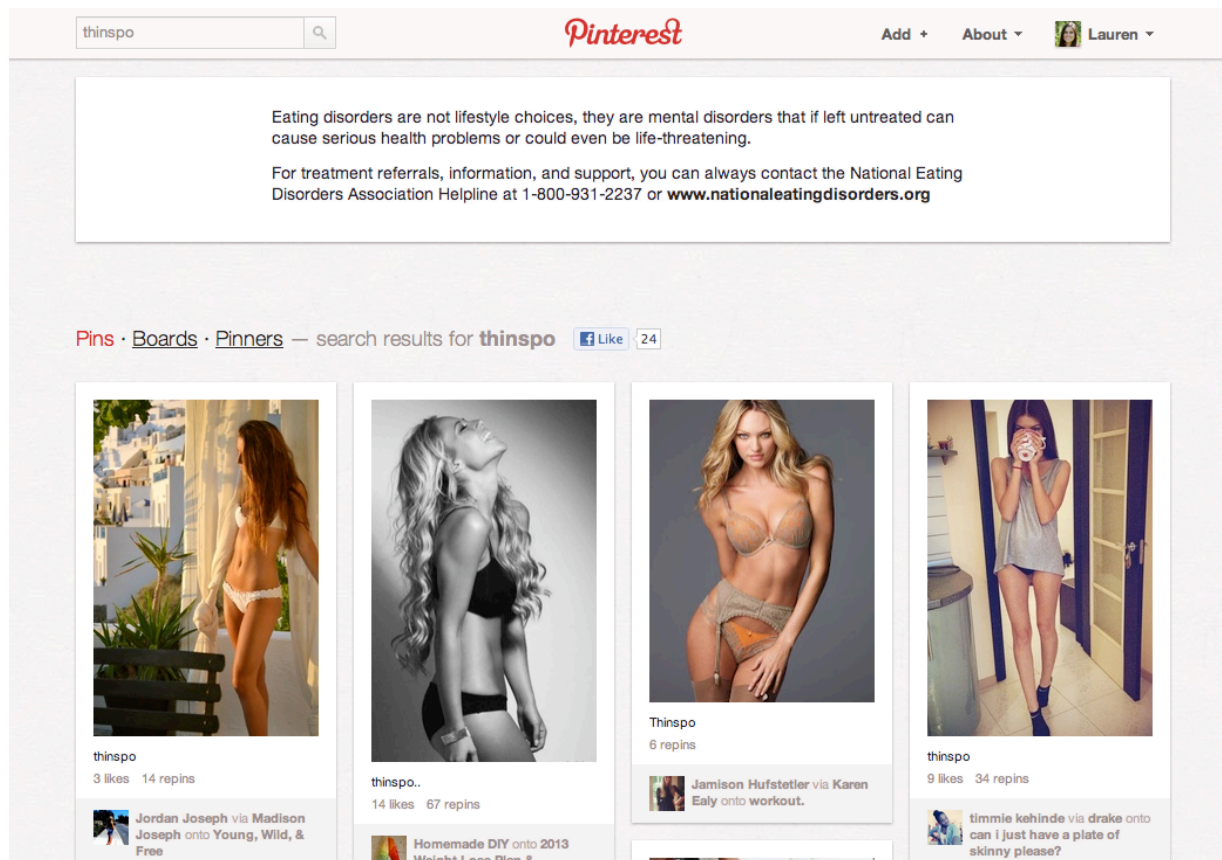


Figure 3.19: Pinterest Public Service Announcement

Despite the efforts of Pinterest, Tumblr, and numerous other social media sites to curb content encouraging eating disorders, thinspo and pro-ana content remains online in large quantities. One of the problems with these measures lies in the gray area of what constitutes a “risk of harm” to other users. Does thinspo really hurt other users, or is it a form of self-expression and creative outlet for those who are already hurting to express their pain? How can a website control how images are interpreted and used? In her article, Gibson admits that although sites can “attempt to ban the women and girls who collect these images into one disturbing collage” (Gibson), banning individual images is next to impossible due to the fact they are “insurmountably ubiquitous.” Gibson states, “We’re so surrounded with images that promote a certain physical ideal

that our culture is basically one big thinspiration board. Social-network bans or not, you don't have to look hard—or even really at all—to be bombarded with these types of images.” Which begs the question: Who is really to blame here? The commercial entities that produce images of stick-thin models, which are then uploaded to sites like Pinterest, or the users themselves, who are exposed so frequently to these images they feel posting the images is the only way to express their desire to replicate the images with their own bodies? As Gibson indicates, “These sites don't create content—they're merely platforms for users to share their own borrowed content.” As Gibson so aptly notes, “The advertising industry, and particularly the beauty and fashion industry, has long been accused of perpetuating a beauty ideal that includes hip-free figures and vertebra you can count. We're bombarded with these images everyday, whether they're collated on a website by a struggling teenager or not.” As a compilation of shared content, Pinterest is not to blame here. Rather than a creator of the Beauty Myth, Pinterest is merely a reflection of it, and a very visual reflection at that.

4 CONCLUSION

The idea of Pinterest being the new women's magazine carries a lot of weight. Although women's magazines have been deemed "retrograde" by some, Naomi Wolf attests to their social importance in *The Beauty Myth*: "What is seldom acknowledged is that [women's magazines] have popularized feminist ideas more widely than any other medium—certainly more widely than explicitly feminist journals. It was through these glossies that issues from the women's movement swept out from the barricades and down from the academic ivory towers to blow into the lives of working class women, rural women, women without higher education. Seen in this light, they are very potent instruments of social change" (Wolf 71-72). Given the Internet's mass availability, the reach of sites like Pinterest has become even more expansive than that of their print counterparts.

And yet there are still those, like Odell, who remain critical of Pinterest and its effect on women. Interestingly, many similarities between these critics' reactions to Pinterest and other critics' reactions to women's magazines are evident. Wolf writes, "Women react so strongly to [magazines'] inconsistencies since they probably recognize that the magazine's contradictions are their own. Their economic reality is that of an individual woman writ large: They reflect the uneasy truce in which women pay for scope and power with beauty thinking. [. . .] Like its readers, the magazine must pay for its often serious, prowoman content with beauty backlash trap-pings; it must do so to reassure its advertisers, who are threatened by the possible effects on women's minds of too much excellence in women's journalism. The magazines' personalities are split between the beauty myth and feminism in exactly the same way those of their readers are split" (71). Undoubtedly, Wolf's observation rings true in many women. The Beauty Myth is

so pervasive in American society, it's nearly impossible to ignore. Perhaps this is why Odell, who believes Pinterest is "killing feminism," can also be credited with writing articles such as "12 Reasons the World's Most Uncomfortable Clothes are the Best" and "15 Life Lessons from *The Rachel Zoe Project*." In line with new, broader conceptions of feminism, there is nothing wrong with being interested in fashion (or writing about it, as Odell frequently does). What is wrong is condemning Pinterest for featuring a wide array of categories of content that just happen to be appealing to women. Another of Odell's most popular articles is titled "Why *50 Shades of Grey* is Good for Women." In the article, Odell argues the popular pornographic novel is beneficial to women because "[i]t finally has the world talking about female sexual desires." But while Odell has the introspection to see past critical interpretations of the novel and instead see it as a text that has begun changing perceptions of what women desire sexually, she lacks the same introspection required to overlook criticisms of Pinterest and instead see it as a medium representative of women's diverse interests. Perhaps Odell's critical view of Pinterest is more indicative of its social currency, like that of women's magazines. After all, as Wolf notes, they "would not provoke such strong feelings if they were merely escapist entertainment" (73).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Pinterest's "Acceptable Use Policy"

Pinterest provides a platform to discover and share things you love. To keep Pinterest running smoothly for all of our Users, you agree that you will use the Service only in a manner consistent with the following Acceptable Use Policy.

You agree not to post User Content that:

- is sexually explicit or contains nudity, partial nudity or pornography;
- creates a risk of harm, loss, physical or mental injury, emotional distress, death, disability, disfigurement, or physical or mental illness to yourself, to any other person, or to any animal;
- may create a risk of any other loss or damage to any person or property;
- seeks to harm or exploit children by exposing them to inappropriate content, asking for personally identifiable details or otherwise;
- violates, or encourages any conduct that violates laws or regulations;
- contains any information or content we deem to be hateful, violent, harmful, abusive, racially or ethnically offensive, defamatory, infringing, invasive of personal privacy or publicity rights, harassing, humiliating to other people (publicly or otherwise), libelous, threatening, profane, or otherwise objectionable;
- contains any information or content that is illegal (including, without limitation, the disclosure of insider information under securities law or of another party's trade secrets);

- infringes any third party's Intellectual Property Rights, privacy rights, publicity rights, or other personal or proprietary rights;
- contains any information or content that you do not have a right to make available under any law or under contractual or fiduciary relationships; or is fraudulent, false, misleading, or deceptive.

You agree not to engage in any of the following prohibited activities:

- Use, display, mirror or frame the Service, any individual element within the Service, the Pinterest name, trademark, logo or other proprietary information, or the layout and design of any page, without our express written consent;
- Access, tamper with, or use non-public areas of the Service, our computer systems, or the technical delivery systems of our providers;
- Attempt to probe, scan, or test the vulnerability of any Pinterest system or network or breach any security or authentication measures;
- Avoid, bypass, remove, deactivate, impair, descramble or otherwise circumvent any technological measure implemented by Pinterest or any of our providers or any other third party (including another user) to protect the Services or Pinterest Content;
- Attempt to access or search the Services, User Content or Pinterest Content or scrape or download User Content or Pinterest Content from the Services, or otherwise use, upload content to, or create new links, reposts, or referrals in the Service through the use of any engine, software, tool, agent, device or mechanism (including automated scripts, spiders, robots, crawlers, data mining tools or the like) other than the software and/or search agents provided by Pinterest or other generally available third party web browsers;

- Send any unsolicited or unauthorized spam and spam comments on posts, advertising messages, promotional materials, email, junk mail, chain letters or other form of solicitation;
- Except for use of a "No Pin" instruction, use any meta tags or other hidden text or metadata utilizing a Pinterest or Pinterest trademark, logo, URL, or product name without Pinterest's express written consent;
- Use the Service for any commercial purpose or the benefit of any third party, except as otherwise explicitly permitted for you by Pinterest or in any manner not permitted by the Terms;
- Use Pinterest user information to forge any TCP/IP packet header or any part of the header information in any email or newsgroup posting, or in any way use the Services to send altered, deceptive or false source-identifying information;
- Attempt to decipher, decompile, disassemble or reverse engineer any of the software used to provide the Services;
- Interfere with, or attempt to interfere with, the access of any user, host or network, including, without limitation, sending a virus, overloading, flooding, spamming, or mail-bombing the Services;
- Collect or store any personally identifiable information from the Services from other users of the Services without their express permission;
- Impersonate or misrepresent your affiliation with any person or entity;
- Violate any applicable law or regulation; or

- Encourage or enable any other individual to do any of the activities prohibited in this Acceptable Use Policy.

Pinterest reserves the right, but is not obligated, to remove any User Content for any reason or for no reason, including User Content that Pinterest believes violates this Acceptable Use Policy or its Terms of Service. Pinterest may also permanently or temporarily terminate or suspend a User account without notice and liability for any reason, including if, in Pinterest's sole determination, a User violates any provision of this Acceptable Use Policy, our Terms of Service, or for no reason.

Appendix B: Tumblr's "A New Policy Against Self-Harm Blogs"

One of the great things about Tumblr is that people use it for just about every conceivable kind of expression. People being people, though, that means that Tumblr sometimes gets used for things that are just wrong. We are deeply committed to supporting and defending our users' freedom of speech, but we do draw some limits. As a company, we've decided that some specific kinds of content aren't welcome on Tumblr. For example, we prohibit spam and identity theft.

Our Content Policy has not, until now, prohibited blogs that actively promote self-harm. These typically take the form of blogs that glorify or promote anorexia, bulimia, and other eating disorders; self-mutilation; or suicide. These are messages and points of view that we strongly oppose, and don't want to be hosting. The question for us has been whether it's better to (a) prohibit them, as a statement against the very ideas of self-harm that they are advancing, or (b) permit them to stay up, accompanied by a public service warning that directs readers to helplines run by organizations like the National Eating Disorders Association.

We are planning to post a new, revised Content Policy in the very near future, and we'd like to ask for input from the Tumblr community on this issue.

Here's what we think the right answer is:

- Implement a new policy against pro-self-harm blogs. Here's draft language we are planning to add to our Content Policy:

Active Promotion of Self-Harm. Don't post content that actively promotes or glorifies self-injury or self-harm. This includes content that urges or encourages readers to cut or mutilate themselves; embrace anorexia, bulimia, or other eating disorders; or commit suicide rather than, e.g., seek counseling or treatment for depression or other disorders. Online dialogue about these acts and conditions is incredibly important; this prohibition is intended to reach only those blogs that cross the line into active promotion or glorification. For example, joking that you need to starve yourself after Thanksgiving or that you wanted to kill yourself after a humiliating date is fine, but recommending techniques for self-starvation or self-mutilation is not.

We aim to begin implementing this policy next week. Of course, we will allow any affected blogs a grace period in which to edit or download your content.

- Start showing PSAs on search results for related keywords. In addition, we plan to start posting "public service announcement"-style language whenever users search for tags that typically go along with pro-self-harm blogs. For example, when a user searches for tags like "anorexia", "anorexic", "bulimia", "bulimic", "thinspiration", "thinspo", "proana", "purge", "purging", etc., we would show PSA language like:

Eating disorders can cause serious health problems, and at their most severe can even be life-threatening. Please contact the [resource organization] at [helpline number] or [website].

So that's our plan. We'd like your feedback. If you have any comments or suggestions, please email them to policy@tumblr.com.