

# Improving and Assessing the Fidelity of Large Language Models Alignment to Online Communities

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## Abstract

Large language models (LLMs) have shown promise in representing individuals and communities, offering new ways to study complex social dynamics. However, effectively aligning LLMs with specific human groups and systematically assessing the fidelity of the alignment remains a challenge. This paper presents a robust framework for aligning LLMs with online communities via instruction-tuning and comprehensively evaluating alignment across various aspects of language, including authenticity, emotional tone, toxicity, and harm. We demonstrate the utility of our approach by applying it to online communities centered on dieting and body image. We administer an eating disorder psychometric test to the aligned LLMs to reveal unhealthy beliefs and successfully differentiate communities with varying levels of eating disorder risk. Our results highlight the potential of LLMs in automated moderation and broader applications in public health and social science research<sup>1</sup>.

## 1 Introduction

**[Warning: This paper discusses eating disorders, which some may find distressing.]**

Large language models (LLMs) have demonstrated an unparalleled ability to generate detailed, nuanced responses to natural language prompts, suggesting potential for their use in creating high-fidelity proxies of people (Simmons and Hare, 2023). Leveraging LLMs to create digital representations of individuals and human groups could provide powerful tools for studying psycho-social dynamics of human behavior, enhancing and personalizing human-computer interactions, and moderating online spaces to promote prosociality, enhance safety, and reduce harm.

To create digital representations of human subgroups, researchers have aligned LLMs to subgroups via steering—i.e., instructing the LLM to

mimic the target subgroup by specifying its core characteristics in the prompt (Santurkar et al., 2023; Durmus et al., 2023). However, this approach does not solve LLMs’ misalignment with the target subgroup. Other methods for aligning LLMs to human subgroups include finetuning the base LLMs<sup>2</sup> like GPT-2 on data generated by specific subgroups (Jiang et al., 2022b; He et al., 2024c). Although this method can produce models that reflect the linguistic patterns of the target population, these finetuned models often lack the flexibility to follow diverse instructions, limiting their utility.

Another key challenge in developing digital representations of human subgroups is evaluating the alignment between the LLM and the target group. Traditional methods compare the LLM’s responses to surveys with those of the target group (Santurkar et al., 2023; Durmus et al., 2023), but this approach misses critical aspects of human expression like emotional reactions (He et al., 2024b). Additionally, surveys are not scalable due to their cost and time requirements, particularly for marginalized or hard-to-reach groups. Besides, mapping organically-formed online communities to clear demographic identities greatly complicates alignment evaluation.

To address these challenges, we propose a framework for aligning LLMs with online communities through instruction-tuning in a fully unsupervised manner. Additionally, we introduce a comprehensive evaluation framework to assess alignment. This enables the creation of high-fidelity digital representations of online communities, paving the way for new research into human behavior, content moderation, public mental health, and social science. As one example, we can administer psychometric instruments to these digital proxies to identify at-risk communities prone to psychopathologies.

<sup>1</sup>Our data and code will be available upon publication.

<sup>2</sup>By “base LLMs” we refer to LLMs that are not finetuned to follow instructions

Our alignment method takes a corpus of social media posts (e.g., tweets) from an online community and creates a set of demonstrations (instruction-response pairs). In each demonstration (Figure 1), the instruction specifies the task (e.g., generate a tweet) with the response being the exact tweet. We then finetune an LLM on these demonstrations to align it with the community. To assess alignment, we generate a synthetic text corpus using the finetuned LLM and compare it to the original posts along four key aspects: 1) authenticity, 2) emotional tone, 3) toxicity, and 4) harm. These dimensions capture the essential features of online social communication, ensuring the aligned LLM accurately reflects the semantics, affect, and style of the target group’s discourse.

|  |
|--|
| <b>Instruction:</b> What would you tweet?  |
| <b>Response:</b> most of the time the only thing i want in the whole world is to be skinny and lose weight |

Figure 1: An example of a demonstration from a pro-eating disorder community, where the response is a tweet from the community.

To demonstrate our framework’s utility, we analyze Twitter discussions in diet and fitness communities, where harmful attitudes about body image exist. While these communities can offer support and encouragement, they often promote unhealthy behaviors and beliefs that put people at risk for developing eating disorders (EDs). Applying traditional psychometric instruments to screen individuals for EDs is impractical and potentially unethical; instead, we use our framework to align LLMs with these communities through automatically generated demonstrations and evaluate alignment to show that the finetuned LLMs outperform baseline LLMs in creating high-fidelity proxies of online communities. We then apply an ED screening questionnaire to community-aligned LLMs, revealing significant differences between communities: pro-anorexia communities show a high risk of unhealthy behaviors, while those critical of the diet culture exhibit the lowest risk. These findings highlight our framework’s potential for automated moderation by distinguishing communities with varying levels of ED risk.

Our framework offers a scalable approach to modeling and analyzing online communities, with broad implications for understanding and mitigating harmful behaviors. By applying this method to ED communities, we demonstrate its potential

to contribute to public health and social science research, highlighting the value of LLMs in studying complex social dynamics.

## 2 Related Work

**Aligning LLMs to Subgroups** There is growing literature (Simmons and Hare, 2023) on aligning LLMs to diverse human subgroups to mimic their language and mindsets. Researchers have aligned LLMs by steering them towards particular demographic groups (Santurkar et al., 2023; Durmus et al., 2023; He et al., 2024b), e.g., by including the target subgroup in the prompt. However, their findings reveal that steering does not solve the model’s misalignment with the target subgroup. Moreover, it is non-trivial to summarize an organically-formed community (e.g., communities in retweet networks) into a concise description that can be used in steering.

Others have aligned LLMs with different subgroups by finetuning the model on the text generated by the subgroups. Jiang et al. (2022b) propose COMMUNITYLM by finetuning two GPT-2 models (Radford et al., 2020) using causal language modeling on tweets from liberals and conservatives, and probing their worldviews from their corresponding finetuned models. He et al. (2024c) extend COMMUNITYLM to probe the views of organically-formed online communities and make use of the interactions between different communities. However, GPT-2 is not instruction-tuned and is not able to answer questions in various formats, like the psychometric instruments we discuss in §6. He et al. (2024a) use an advanced LLM (e.g., Claude-3) to distill knowledge from the community’s raw data and generate high-quality instruction-response pairs, where the instructions aim to query the community’s mindset, and the corresponding responses are abstracted from the ideas conveyed in the raw data. The generated instruction-response pairs are used to finetune a foundational LLM (e.g., Llama-3) for alignment. However, the API costs of querying the advanced LLM are non-negligible.

### Evaluating LLMs’ Alignment to Subgroups

Existing works (Santurkar et al., 2023; Durmus et al., 2023) measure an LLM’s alignment with a target subgroup using multi-choice surveys. Specifically, they prompt the LLM to respond to a survey question from the perspective of a subgroup and then compare the LLM-generated distribution over

|     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 173 | the different options of the question to that of the                    | 224 |
| 174 | survey respondents belonging to the target group.                       | 225 |
| 175 | However, collecting survey responses can be costly                      | 226 |
| 176 | and time-consuming. Also, responses on sensi-                           | 227 |
| 177 | tive topics, such as mental health, may be biased                       | 228 |
| 178 | due to stigma and social desirability bias (Gordon,                     |     |
| 179 | 1987). Our framework evaluates LLM alignment                            |     |
| 180 | by comparing the LLM-generated synthetic text to                        |     |
| 181 | the original text written by humans is significantly                    |     |
| 182 | more scalable, unbiased, and cost-effective.                            |     |
| 183 | <b>LLMs and Psychometric Tests</b> LLMs can re-                         |     |
| 184 | spond to psychometric instruments that were orig-                       |     |
| 185 | inally designed to assess individual human psy-                         |     |
| 186 | chological and emotional states. Researchers have                       |     |
| 187 | administered these instruments to LLMs to probe                         |     |
| 188 | their decision-making processes, reasoning abil-                        |     |
| 189 | ities, cognitive biases, and other psychological                        |     |
| 190 | traits—Pellert et al. (2024) call this practice “AI                     |     |
| 191 | Psychometrics”. Coda-Forno et al. (2023) show                           |     |
| 192 | that GPT-3.5 generated consistently high scores on                      |     |
| 193 | responses to a widely used anxiety questionnaire.                       |     |
| 194 | Tanmay et al. (2023) measure GPT-4’s moral rea-                         |     |
| 195 | soning abilities by applying an ethical measure-                        |     |
| 196 | ment instrument for individuals. Researchers also                       |     |
| 197 | administer personality tests to LLMs to identify                        |     |
| 198 | their personality traits (Jiang et al., 2022a; Lu et al.,               |     |
| 199 | 2023; Serapio-García et al., 2023). In contrast, we                     |     |
| 200 | apply psychometric questionnaires to a specific on-                     |     |
| 201 | line community—via a finetuned LLM—to learn                             |     |
| 202 | more about the mindset of the community mem-                            |     |
| 203 | bers. We show that this helps reveal unhealthy                          |     |
| 204 | beliefs within these communities and even iden-                         |     |
| 205 | tify pathologies, like harmful cognitions associated                    |     |
| 206 | with EDs.   |     |
| 207 | <b>Online Eating Disorders Communities</b> Pro-                         |     |
| 208 | ED (pro-anorexia) communities are online spaces                         |     |
| 209 | that frame EDs as a lifestyle rather than an ill-                       |     |
| 210 | ness. While they provide social support, a sense                        |     |
| 211 | of belonging, and empathy for stigmatized indi-                         |     |
| 212 | viduals (Juarascio et al., 2010; Oksanen et al.,                        |     |
| 213 | 2016; Yeshua-Katz and Martins, 2013; McCormack,                         |     |
| 214 | 2010), they also promote harmful behaviors,                             |     |
| 215 | such as weight loss tips and “thinspiration” imagery,                   |     |
| 216 | exacerbating EDs and psychological distress (Ging                       |     |
| 217 | and Garvey, 2018; Mento et al., 2021).                                  |     |
| 218 | Previous research has focused on identifying                            |     |
| 219 | harmful content and at-risk users within these com-                     |     |
| 220 | munities. For example, Chancellor et al. (2016a)                        |     |
| 221 | developed a lexical classifier to predict posts moder-                  |     |
| 222 | ated by Instagram for self-harm content, comparing                      |     |
| 223 | pro-recovery and pro-ED communities (Chancellor                         |     |
|     | et al., 2016b,c). In contrast, our study examines                       | 224 |
|     | the collective mindset of these communities as ex-                      | 225 |
|     | pressed through their discussions, using advanced                       | 226 |
|     | language models to assess attitudes toward mental                       | 227 |
|     | health and body image issues.   | 228 |
|     | <b>3 Communities in Online Discussions</b>                              | 229 |
|     | We collect online conversations related to EDs and                      | 230 |
|     | identify organically-formed communities within                          | 231 |
|     | the broader context of weight loss, dieting, and                        | 232 |
|     | fitness discussions.  | 233 |
|     | <b>3.1 Data Collection</b>  | 234 |
|     | We collected 2.6M tweets from 557K users from                           | 235 |
|     | October 2022 to March 2023 using ED-related key-                        | 236 |
|     | words to query Twitter. For keywords, we start                          | 237 |
|     | with a set of terms that promote ED (Chancellor                         | 238 |
|     | et al., 2016a; Pater et al., 2016), such as <i>thinspo</i>              | 239 |
|     | (thin inspiration), <i>proana</i> (pro-anorexia), and <i>pro-</i>       | 240 |
|     | <i>mia</i> (pro-bulimia), among others. We remove spam                  | 241 |
|     | terms yielding unrelated content, such as <i>skinny</i> .               | 242 |
|     | We expanded the query set to include closely re-                        | 243 |
|     | lated topics such as diet and weight loss through                       | 244 |
|     | terms such as ( <i>ketodiet</i> , <i>weightloss</i> , . . .), and anti- | 245 |
|     | diet culture ( <i>bodypositivity</i> , <i>dietculture</i> , . . .). See | 246 |
|     | Appendix A.1 for the full set of search terms.                          | 247 |
|     | <b>3.2 Identifying Communities</b>                                      | 248 |
|     | We construct a retweet network where nodes                              | 249 |
|     | are users, and (undirected) edges link users who                        | 250 |
|     | retweet each other. Visualization of the retweet                        | 251 |
|     | network is shown in Figure 7 in Appendix A.2.                           | 252 |
|     | We use Louvain modularity maximization (Blon-                           | 253 |
|     | del et al., 2008) to identify dense clusters of users                   | 254 |
|     | who frequently retweet one another. These clusters                      | 255 |
|     | are organically formed based on shared interests,                       | 256 |
|     | consisting of users who pay attention to each other.                    | 257 |
|     | Detailed statistics and content of the clusters are                     | 258 |
|     | shown in Table 3 and Figure 6 in Appendix A.2.                          | 259 |
|     | Based on the thematic profiling of discussions (Ta-                     | 260 |
|     | ble 4 in Appendix A.2), we categorize the clus-                         | 261 |
|     | ters into six communities: <i>Pro-ED</i> , <i>Keto &amp; Diet</i> ,     | 262 |
|     | <i>Weight Loss Drugs</i> , <i>Body Image</i> , <i>Healthy Lifestyle</i> | 263 |
|     | <i>&amp; Weight Loss</i> , and <i>Anti-ED</i> . This categorization     | 264 |
|     | is intended to label the communities for easy re-                       | 265 |
|     | ference in subsequent analyses, and the labels do                       | 266 |
|     | not cover the full spectrum of discussions in the                       | 267 |
|     | communities.  | 268 |
|     | After identifying communities in the retweet                            | 269 |
|     | network, we clean the tweets by removing URLs,                          | 270 |
|     | mentions, hashtags, and emojis, and we filter out                       | 271 |



retweets and comments, only keeping the original tweets. To ensure high-quality data, we compute the perplexities of the tweets using BERTweet (Nguyen et al., 2020) that is pretrained on tweets, and select a maximum of 10K highest quality (i.e., lowest perplexity) tweets from each community. If there are fewer than 10K tweets from the community, we keep all of them. The numbers of tweets from the community *Pro-ED*, *Keto & Diet*, *Body Image*, *Anti-ED*, *Healthy Lifestyle & Weight Loss*, and *Weight Loss Drugs* are 10K, 10K, 3.3K, 2.9K, 10K, and 10K respectively.

## 4 Aligning LLMs to Communities

There are  $n$  online communities  $\{C_1, C_2, \dots, C_n\}$  on a topic (e.g., EDs), each characterized by their own beliefs and perspectives. Members of a community  $C_i$  produce a body of text  $D_i$  (e.g., tweets) that reflects their collective opinions and behaviors. Our objective is to align an LLM  $f$  to each specific community  $C_i$  by training it on the corresponding text corpus  $D_i$ . The resulting model,  $f'_i$ , should capture the community’s unique collective mindset, enabling it to generate responses that authentically represent the community’s voice.

### 4.1 Constructing Instruction-Response Pairs

To align an LLM  $f$  to a particular community  $C$ , we employ a finetuning process using a set of demonstrations (instruction-response pairs). We propose creating demonstrations based on the community’s raw text corpus  $D$ , which is cost-efficient, and yet curated demonstrations can be used to finetune a foundational LLM (e.g., Llama-3) effectively.

For each community  $C_i$ , we use tweets in  $D_i$  as the responses verbatim in the demonstrations. To create instructions that can be answered by the tweets, we focus on the tweet generation task. We curate an instruction pool of 20 different instruction templates (Table 5 in Appendix B.1). For a community, a tweet is paired with an instruction randomly sampled from the instruction pool. As a result, the community has a maximum of 10K demonstrations  $Z_i = \{(x_j, y_j)\}_{j=1}^m$  for tweet generation, where  $m$  is the size of the community’s text corpus  $D$ .

For each community, we augment the demonstrations of tweet generation with the 52K Alpaca (Taori et al., 2023) demonstrations that cover a wide range of tasks to retain the instruction-following

capabilities of the LLM and not restrict it to only generating tweets. Ultimately, there are a maximum of 62K demonstrations in the demonstration corpus for a community.

### 4.2 Instruction Tuning LLMs

For each community  $C_i$ , we align a Llama-3 model  $f'_i$  (AI@Meta, 2024) to the community using its demonstration corpus  $Z_i$ . The LLM is finetuned on 4 Tesla H100-80GB GPUs with batch size 8 for 3 epochs, which takes about 3 hours.

## 5 Assessing Alignment

To assess how effectively a finetuned LLM  $f'_i$  aligns with its target community  $C_i$ , we measure the model’s ability to mimic the responses of community members. We first generate a synthetic corpus  $D_i^{ft}$  using  $f'_i$  and compare it to the original text corpus  $D_i$  from the community. The more closely  $D_i^{ft}$  resembles  $D_i$ , the better aligned the LLM is with the community. We evaluate the similarity between  $D_i^{ft}$  and  $D_i$  across 1) authenticity, 2) emotional tone, 3) toxicity, and 4) harm. While not exhaustive, these aspects capture the essential features of online social communication. Authenticity ensures that the aligned LLM accurately reflects the meaning, content, and linguistic patterns of the target population’s language and generates contextually appropriate responses. Emotional tone captures the affective aspects of communication, helping to convey nuances that may not be evident from semantics alone. Toxicity measures the model’s ability to reflect hostility and aggression in the population’s discourse. Finally, recognizing that certain online conversations can negatively impact users, we compare the types and levels of harm in language across groups. Although in this paper we focus on the domain of EDs, we argue that our LLM alignment framework is naturally generalizable to online communities in other domains.<sup>3</sup>

### 5.1 Synthetic Corpus Generation

Given a community  $C_i$ , we create a synthetic corpus  $D_i^{ft}$  by prompting an LLM  $f'_i$  aligned to the community to generate tweets. To diversify the LLM generations, we compile a set of 27 topics relevant to ED discussions, such as *thinspo*, *fitspo*, and *bonespo* (Appendix C.1), and prompt LLMs to generate tweets on these topics. When generating

<sup>3</sup>We acknowledge that evaluating harm is more tailored to the ED domain, but other evaluation aspects should be widely applicable.

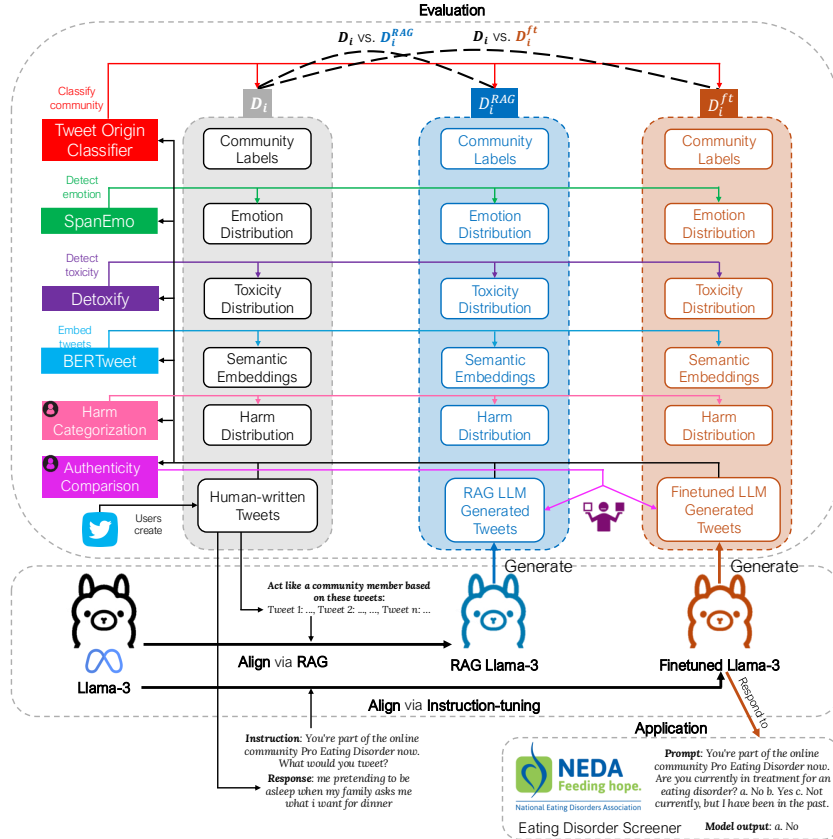


Figure 2: The framework of our method. (1) We align an LLM (Llama-3) to an online community by finetuning the LLM to follow instructions on the task of generating tweets written by users in the community. (2) To prove the effectiveness of alignment, we compare three tweet corpora for each community: human-written tweets  $D_i$ , RAG LLM-generated tweets  $D_i^{RAG}$ , and finetuned LLM-generated tweets  $D_i^{ft}$ . We show that  $D_i^{ft}$  is closer to  $D_i$  than  $D_i^{RAG}$  is, along the following aspects: (a) A classifier trained to classify the tweet origin (what community the tweet belongs to) on  $\mathbb{D} = \{D_i\}_{i=1}^n$  performs equally well on  $\mathbb{D}^{ft} = \{D_i^{ft}\}_{i=1}^n$ , but not on  $\mathbb{D}^{RAG} = \{D_i^{RAG}\}_{i=1}^n$ ; (b) the emotion and toxicity distributions of  $D_i^{ft}$  are much closer to that of  $D_i$  compared to  $D_i^{RAG}$ ; (c) the semantic embeddings of  $D_i^{ft}$  are closer to that of  $D_i$  in the embedding space than that of  $D_i^{RAG}$  are; (d) a human annotator decides that  $D_i^{ft}$  is more aligned to the underlying distribution of  $D_i$  than  $D_i^{RAG}$  is; (e) two ED experts determine that  $D_i^{ft}$  carries harmful narratives that are more similar to  $D_i$  than  $D_i^{RAG}$ . (3) As the LLM is aligned with the community and can speak in the voice of that community, we administer an ED questionnaire to screen the community for EDs.

tweets on a topic, we reuse the diverse instructions from the instruction pool (Table 5 in Appendix B.1). An example instruction is “What would you tweet about **fasting**?” For each topic, the LLM generates 400 tweets, resulting in a synthetic corpus  $D_i^{ft}$  with 10,800 tweets for all 27 topics.

We detail the number of tweets in the community’s original text corpus  $D_i$  that contain the keyword(s) of each of the 27 topics in Table 7 in the Appendix C.1. We observe that  $D_i$  contains a very limited number of tweets discussing these topics. This is because we removed the hashtags in tweet processing, and these keywords usually appear in the hashtags. Consequently, when the LLM is finetuned on  $D_i$ , it is not extensively exposed to tweets

that are directly related to these topics. This ensures that **the synthetic corpus  $D_i^{ft}$  does not simply replicate  $D_i$** . Instead, when the finetuned LLM  $f_i^t$  generates synthetic tweets on these 27 topics, it extrapolates from existing data in  $D_i$  to predict how community members might discuss these previously unseen topics.

**Baseline** We use the LLM with retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) (Lewis et al., 2020) as a baseline. We do not finetune the RAG model. For a community  $C_i$ , when prompting the model to generate synthetic tweets on topic  $t$ , we retrieve 250 tweets, consisting of (1) the tweets containing the topic keyword(s), if available, and (2) randomly sampled tweets from  $D_i$ . Each retrieved tweet is

truncated at 20 tokens. We include the retrieved tweets in the prompt, instruct the model to learn the community’s mindset from the tweets, and generate synthetic tweets. See Appendix C.2 for the complete prompting template. The synthetic corpus on all topics from the RAG model is denoted as  $D_i^{RAG}$ .

## 5.2 Alignment Dimensions

### 5.2.1 Automatic Evaluation

**Tweet Origin Classification** We train a classifier to determine the community from which a tweet originated. We achieve this by finetuning Llama-3 using demonstrations with the following template “Instruction: *From these communities: Pro Eating Disorder, Keto & Diet, Body Image, Anti Eating Disorder, Healthy lifestyle & Weight Loss, and Weight Loss Drugs; which community does this Tweet belong to? {Tweet}* Response: *{Community name}*”. We randomly sample 3,000 original tweets from each community’s corpus  $D_i$  and construct a total of 18,000 demonstrations for finetuning. We train the classifier using 95% demonstrations and use the remaining 5% to test, leading to a test accuracy of 0.74. Using this model, we classify the finetuned LLM-generated tweets in  $\mathbb{D}^{ft} = \{D_i^{ft}\}_{i=1}^n$  and RAG LLM-generated tweets  $\mathbb{D}^{RAG} = \{D_i^{RAG}\}_{i=1}^n$ , leading to an accuracy of 0.75 and 0.59, respectively. These results indicate that the classifier trained on original tweets accurately recognizes the tweets generated by the finetuned LLM. However, it performs poorly on the tweets generated by the RAG LLM, demonstrating that the finetuned LLMs better capture community-specific linguistic characteristics.

**Semantic Comparison** We compute the semantic embeddings of  $D_i$ ,  $D_i^{ft}$ , and  $D_i^{RAG}$  using BERTweet (Nguyen et al., 2020). We then measure the distance between these embeddings using the Fréchet Inception Distance (FID) (Heusel et al., 2017). This metric provides a quantitative measure of the semantic distance between two text corpora. We implement it using the IBM comparing-corpora package (Kour et al., 2022).  $FID(D_i, D_i^{ft})$  and  $FID(D_i, D_i^{RAG})$  for different communities are shown in Table 1. We see that  $FID(D_i, D_i^{ft})$  is much smaller than  $FID(D_i, D_i^{RAG})$ , implying that the finetuned LLM outputs are more semantically similar responses to the original posts compared to the RAG LLM.

| Community                       | $FID(D_i, D_i^{RAG})$ | $FID(D_i, D_i^{ft})$ |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Pro-ED                          | 1.18                  | 0.48                 |
| Body Image                      | 1.42                  | 0.37                 |
| Keto & Diet                     | 1.05                  | 0.51                 |
| Anti-ED                         | 1.00                  | 0.52                 |
| Healthy Lifestyle & Weight Loss | 1.19                  | 0.54                 |
| Weight Loss Drugs               | 1.04                  | 0.40                 |

Table 1: Fréchet Inception Distances (FID) (1) between human-written tweets  $D_i$  and RAG LLM generated tweets  $D_i^{RAG}$ , and (2) between human-written tweets  $D_i$  and finetuned LLM-generated tweets  $D_i^{ft}$ . A smaller distance indicates more similarity.

**Emotion and Toxicity Analysis** Emotions and toxicity are vital aspects of online social interactions (Prescott et al., 2019). They can reveal the underlying tone, intent, and style of communication of online users. Within ED communities, these elements heavily impact self-perception of body image (Brytek-Matera and Schiltz, 2011) and can exacerbate body dissatisfaction (Kast, 2018).

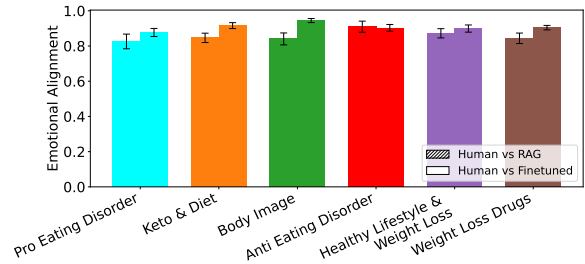


Figure 3: Emotional agreement (a) between human-written tweets and RAG LLM-generated tweets, and (b) between human-written tweets and finetuned LLM-generated tweets. The differences in affective alignment between pairs within each community are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

We analyze the emotions of tweets using SpanEmo (Alhuzali and Ananiadou, 2021). For each tweet, SpanEmo returns a vector of confidence scores of eleven emotions: anger, anticipation, disgust, fear, joy, love, optimism, pessimism, sadness, surprise, and trust. For a community  $C_i$ , we sum the emotion confidence vectors of all tweets (i.e.,  $D_i$ ,  $D_i^{ft}$ , or  $D_i^{RAG}$ ) and normalize them, resulting in an emotion distribution vector  $e_i$ . We then compute the agreement between  $e_i^{ft}$  and  $e_i$ , and between  $e_i^{RAG}$  and  $e_i$ . The emotional agreement is measured as one minus the Jensen-Shannon distance between the two distribution vectors. As illustrated in Figure 3, for most communities,  $D_i^{ft}$  more closely resembles the emotional tone of  $D_i$

469 compared to  $D_i^{RAG}$ . This demonstrates that fine-  
 470 tuning LLMs can effectively capture the authentic  
 471 emotional tone of posts from communities.

472 We use Detoxify (Hanu and Unitary team, 2020)  
 473 to measure toxicity in tweets (Rajadesingan et al.,  
 474 2020; Sheth et al., 2022). For a tweet, Detoxify  
 475 returns a value between 0 and 1 indicating the level  
 476 of toxicity. We only include tweets with toxicity  
 477 levels equal to or greater than 0.05 for clarity and  
 478 to reduce noise. Figure 4 shows the distributions of  
 479 toxicity scores of human-written tweets  $D_i$ , RAG  
 480 LLM-generated tweets  $D_i^{RAG}$  and finetuned LLM-  
 481 generated tweets  $D_i^{ft}$ . We observe that the toxicity  
 482 distribution of  $D_i^{ft}$  matches more closely to that  
 483 of  $D_i$  compared to  $D_i^{RAG}$  for most communities,  
 484 and tweets from the anti-ED community have the  
 485 highest toxicity.

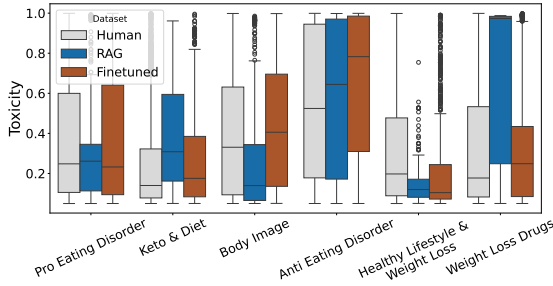


Figure 4: Toxicity distributions across different communities of human-written posts, RAG LLM generated posts, and finetuned LLM generated posts.

## 486 5.2.2 Human Evaluation

487 **Authenticity Comparison** An annotator with ex-  
 488 pertise in EDs on social media was presented with  
 489 300 triplets, 50 from each community, where a  
 490 triplet consists of a community name, a RAG LLM-  
 491 generated tweet  $d_{i,j}^{RAG} \in D_i^{RAG}$ , and a finetuned  
 492 LLM-generated tweet  $d_{i,k}^{ft} \in D_i^{ft}$ . Both tweets in  
 493 a triplet are on the same topic and from the same  
 494 community. For each triplet, the annotator was  
 495 asked to decide which tweet was more aligned with  
 496 the given community, by referring to the following  
 497 characteristics: mis/use of ingroup language, refer-  
 498 ences to themes in underlying distribution (e.g. the  
 499 Body Image community often references nudity),  
 500 use of capitalization, and coherence of message. In  
 501 225 out of 300 triplets, the annotator chose  $d_{i,j}^{ft}$   
 502 as a better match, indicating the finetuned LLM is more  
 503 aligned with the community.

504 **Harm Categorization** Online ED communities  
 505 pose significant risks by promoting and normaliz-

ing harmful behaviors (Lerman et al., 2023). Harm  
 and toxicity are distinct in online discourse where  
 toxicity detection algorithms may mistakenly flag  
 explicit yet harmless language as toxic (Sánchez  
 et al., 2024). We come up with a dimension tai-  
 lored to this ED domain where we assess harm by  
 focusing on the underlying semantic content, as  
 opposed to surface-level style. Our goal is for the  
 finetuned LLM,  $f_i^t$ , to accurately capture the level  
 of harm within these communities.

There are no existing classifiers for automatic  
 harm detection in the context of EDs. In collabora-  
 tion with ED experts, we developed a compre-  
 hensive taxonomy of harm specific to ED online  
 content, covering dimensions such as body im-  
 age, relationships with food and exercise, and self-  
 disclosure. Harm is defined as the promotion or  
 glorification of unhealthy dieting and body objecti-  
 fication.

We sampled 360 tweets across six communities,  
 with 20 each from  $D_i$ ,  $D_i^{RAG}$ , and  $D_i^{ft}$ . Two an-  
 notators with ED expertise labeled these tweets  
 based on two tasks: (1) determine whether a tweet  
 is harmful, and (2) classify harmful tweets into  
 one of three fine-grained categories—*body image  
 objectification*, *relationship to food and exercise*,  
 or *self-disclosure*. Annotators achieved a Cohen’s  
 Kappa score of 0.384 for identifying if harm was  
 present and 0.519 for classifying fine-grained harm  
 categories, indicating fair to moderate agreement.

A tweet was assigned to a harm category if both  
 annotators agreed. Out of 360 tweets, 34 were  
 classified into harm categories across  $\mathbb{D}$ ,  $\mathbb{D}^{RAG}$ ,  
 and  $\mathbb{D}^{ft}$ . Figure 5 shows the distribution of these  
 categories, demonstrating that finetuned LLMs bet-  
 ter replicate the distribution of harm found in the  
 community’s conversations.

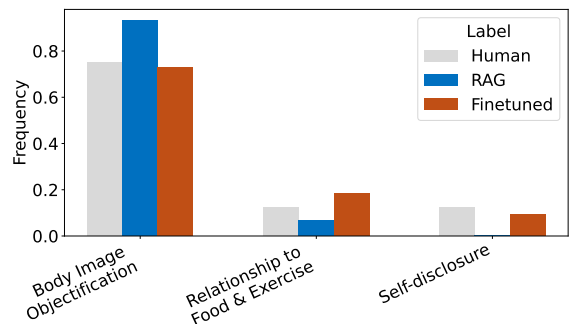


Figure 5: Distribution of the three fine-grained harm categories



## 6 Case Study: Screening Online Communities for Eating Disorders

In §5, we demonstrated that the finetuned LLM learns a more accurate representation of the community than the baseline method. This motivates us to apply psychometric instruments designed to evaluate an individual’s risk of EDs to online communities to help uncover unhealthy body and eating concerns within them.

**Eating Disorder Screener** The Stanford-Washington University Eating Disorder Screener (SWED) (Graham et al., 2019) is a concise screening tool for ED behaviors. The screener has been widely used in both men and women (Fitzsimmons-Craft et al., 2018) and incorporated into an online tool (NEDA, 2019) by the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA, n.d). SWED consists of 11 questions (see Appendix D.1), both multiple-choice and open-ended, covering demographics, height, and weight, ED behaviors, weight and shape concerns, and impairment.

We focus on a subset of SWED questions and evaluate responses using four key criteria (Fitzsimmons-Craft et al., 2018): C1, C2, C3, and C4. These items indicate a higher risk of EDs when the score is elevated (C1) or when being true (C2, C3, C4). For details, see Appendix D.2 and D.3.

**Screening Online Communities via Finetuned LLMs** We prompt finetuned LLMs to respond to questions on the SWED screener. To account for randomness, for each item on the SWED questionnaire, the finetuned LLM generates 50 responses. The responses (Table 8 in Appendix D.5) are aggregated using a majority vote for each question. The results, Table 2, indicate that the *Pro Eating Disorder* community exhibits the highest levels of body image concerns, followed by the *Keto & Diet* community. Furthermore, both communities meet all three criteria signaling a high risk of ED pathology, whereas responses of the *Anti Eating Disorder* community are consistent with a low risk of ED.

These findings align with our empirical observations. The content shared by the *Pro Eating Disorders* community glorifies thinness and includes tips to promote disordered behaviors and body dysmorphia. Conversely, the *Anti Eating Disorder* community is critical of the diet culture and people who glorify EDs. The relatively high-risk score of the *Keto & Diet* community is a concerning indicator that this community may serve as a gateway

to EDs. In contrast, the *Body Image* community, which mostly posts about body positivity, has a low risk of EDs, as does the *Healthy Lifestyle & Weight Loss* community. Although the latter focuses on weight loss, it appears to achieve this goal through healthy behaviors.

| Community                       | C1   | C2 | C3 | C4 |
|---------------------------------|------|----|----|----|
| Pro Eating Disorder             | 45.0 | T  | T  | T  |
| Keto & Diet                     | 33.3 | T  | T  | T  |
| Weight Loss Drugs               | 16.7 | F  | F  | T  |
| Body Image                      | 15.0 | F  | F  | F  |
| Healthy Lifestyle & Weight Loss | 13.3 | T  | F  | F  |
| Anti Eating Disorder            | 13.3 | F  | F  | F  |

Table 2: Eating disorder risk assessment on the finetuned LLMs for different communities, using four criteria—C1 through C4. For C1, a higher score indicates a higher risk of an ED. For C2, C3, and C4, being positive implies higher risk.

## 7 Conclusion

We demonstrate that aligning LLMs to online communities helps create high-fidelity digital proxies, which can be queried to reveal the implicit mindsets of these communities. When applied to online diet and fitness communities, the method uncovers communities with unhealthy body image and dieting beliefs that put their members at risk of EDs. This is important, as harmful communities that indoctrinate users into extreme ideologies (Schmitz et al., 2022) or glorify EDs and self-harm (Goldenberg et al., 2022) often evade moderation by using coded language that is opaque to outsiders or obfuscate harmful content via coded language and misspellings (Chancellor et al., 2016d; Cobb, 2017; Bickham et al., 2024). Our method can help online platforms bridge these obstacles to create safe and supportive online communities.

## Limitations

**Dataset Bias.** The anonymized version of our dataset may contain implicit biases reflecting societal prejudices or unequal representation of demographic sub-groups. More specifically, ED symptoms have a history of being under-diagnosed in African American and Hispanic adolescents, in part due to stereotypical representation of ED being Caucasian adolescent girls (Gordon et al., 2002). This historical bias could be inadvertently learned



627 by our model, resulting in discriminatory behavior. 628 In our future work, we hope to evaluate the model’s 629 fairness across different user groups, allowing us 630 to properly mitigate dataset biases.

631 **Evolving Nature of Online Communities.** Cap- 632 turing the evolving nature of online communities is 633 potentially difficult. Online discourse is dynamic, 634 with language, topics, and sentiments shifting over 635 time. Our finetuning process may not fully account 636 for these temporal changes, which could result in 637 misalignment when the model is applied to current 638 discussions within the community.

639 **Synthetic Corpus Artifacts.** The synthetic cor- 640 pus generated by the LLM might also introduce 641 artifacts that do not fully represent the authentic 642 discourse of the community. Although we strive 643 for diversity in the generated content, the model’s 644 predictions on previously unseen topics may not 645 always accurately reflect how community members 646 would engage with those topics in real-life scenar- 647 ios.

648 **Evaluation Metrics.** While the aspects of authen- 649 ticity, emotional tone, toxicity, and harm capture 650 important aspects of online communication, they 651 may not encompass all the subtle and complex fea- 652 tures of human discourse. As a result, some aspects 653 of community interaction may be underrepresented 654 or overlooked in our evaluation process.

655 **Complete Coverage of Eating Disorders.** This 656 paper looks at the discussions of ED in online com- 657 munities. We focus on a conglomeration of ED, 658 including bulimia nervosa, anorexia nervosa, and 659 binge eating disorder. Besides ED, our dataset 660 captures other discussions related to weight con- 661 cerns, such as weight loss, diet, body positivity, etc. 662 Unfortunately, our data does not comprehensively 663 represent all existing ED. However, our methods 664 ensure that if a large ED community has some over- 665 lap with our keyword list, the community will be 666 identified.

## 667 Ethics Statement

668 **Risk of Finetuning Models Towards Harm** In 669 our study, we expect the finetuned LLMs to repli- 670 cate harmful narratives from online communities. 671 This is done solely to demonstrate that, through our 672 alignment framework, LLMs can accurately cap- 673 ture the nuanced language of these communities, 674 including harmful content. Our objective is not to

675 create models with malicious intent. We strongly 676 advise that any future replication of this work be 677 conducted with extreme caution.

678 **Community-Level Diagnosis.** Diagnosing psy- 679 chiatric illness at the community level comes with 680 the risk of falsely diagnosing some community 681 members. This could lead to unjust actions against 682 users, such as unwarranted bans or removal of con- 683 tent. Additionally, approximating community be- 684 havior inherently excludes minority group mem- 685 bers. Simultaneously, anorexia is one of the dead- 686 liest mental health disorders<sup>4</sup> and participation in 687 online pro-ED spaces heightens one’s disease risk 688 (Mento et al., 2021). By evaluating psychiatric ill- 689 ness on the community level, we can identify toxic 690 communities, helping content moderation experts 691 deploy proper interventions to promote healthy and 692 safe online environments. We encourage the use 693 of human moderators to review and validate the 694 decisions made by our model, particularly in cases 695 with low confidence scores.

696 **Topic Sensitivity and Privacy** The sensitive na- 697 ture of our topic means that our outputs could be 698 misused, such as targeted advertising. Addition- 699 ally, our dataset includes some tweets that disclose 700 deeply personal information such as medical diag- 701 noses, weight information, and personal struggles. 702 Many of these tweets are posted under the assump- 703 tion of anonymous identity. By collecting these 704 tweets, user-specific information may be pieced to- 705 gether thus de-anonymizing some users. For these 706 reasons, we take precautions to anonymize the so- 707 cial media posts before feeding them to the lan- 708 guage models. Additionally, researchers can be 709 granted access to generated tweets upon detailed 710 inquiry.

711 **Hallucination Risk.** Our finetuned models can 712 exhibit hallucinations, generating incorrect or non- 713 sensical information. Hallucination in the context 714 of community alignment can lead to community 715 misrepresentation. In future work, we hope to uti- 716 lize some factual-based evaluation datasets to mea- 717 sure model hallucination.

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| 961 | Kumar Tanmay, Aditi Khandelwal, Utkarsh Agarwal,  | • <i>meanspo, m34nspo</i> : be deliberately mean or       | 1008 |
| 962 | and Monojit Choudhury. 2023. <a href="#">Probing the moral de-</a>  | insulting to motivate someone to do some-                 | 1009 |
| 963 | <a href="#">velopment of large language models through defining</a>                                       | thing.  | 1010 |
| 964 | <a href="#">issues test</a> . <i>Preprint</i> , arXiv:2309.13356.   |   |      |
| 965 | Rohan Taori, Ishaan Gulrajani, Tianyi Zhang, Yann   | • <i>midriff</i> : refers to the area of the body between | 1011 |
| 966 | Dubois, Xuechen Li, Carlos Guestrin, Percy Liang,   | the chest and the waist. It often shows one’s             | 1012 |
| 967 | and Tatsunori B. Hashimoto. 2023. Stanford alpaca:  | ribcage and is closely associated with being              | 1013 |
| 968 | An instruction-following llama model. <a href="https://github.com/tatsu-lab/stanford_alpaca">https://</a> | skinny.   | 1014 |
| 969 | <a href="https://github.com/tatsu-lab/stanford_alpaca">github.com/tatsu-lab/stanford_alpaca</a> .         |   |      |
| 970 | C Taylor, Susan Bryson, Kristine Luce, Darby Cuning,  | • <i>ozempic, wegovy, semaglutide</i> : refers to a       | 1015 |
| 971 | Angela Doyle, Liana Abascal, Roxanne Rockwell,  | medication primarily used to treat type 2 dia-            | 1016 |
| 972 | Parvati Dev, Andrew Winzelberg, and Denise Wil-   | betes but has gained attention for its use as a           | 1017 |
| 973 | fley. 2006. <a href="#">Prevention of eating disorders in at-risk</a>                                     | weightloss drug   | 1018 |
| 974 | <a href="#">college-age women</a> . <i>Archives of general psychiatry</i> ,                               |   |      |
| 975 | 63:881–8.   | • <i>thighgapworkout</i> : refers to exercises aimed at   | 1019 |
| 976 | Daphna Yeshua-Katz and Nicole Martins. 2013. Com-   | achieving a gap between the thighs, a contro-             | 1020 |
| 977 | municating stigma: The pro-ana paradox. <i>Health</i>   | versial and unrealistic body goal often associ-           | 1021 |
| 978 | <i>Communication</i> , 28(5):499–508.   | ated with unhealthy body image standards.                 | 1022 |
| 979 | <b>A Online Communities in ED Discussions</b>   |   |      |
| 980 | <b>A.1 Search Terms</b>   | • <i>thinspo</i> : short for "thinpiration," referring    | 1023 |
| 981 | The terms used for tweet collection are: <i>anatips,</i>  | to content or imagery that promotes extreme               | 1024 |
| 982 | <i>bodygoals, bodyimage, bodypositivity, chloet-</i>  | thinness.   | 1025 |
| 983 | <i>ingchallenge, cleaneating, cleanvegan, eatingdis-</i>  |   |      |
| 984 | <i>order, edrecovery, edtw, edvent, fatspo, fearfood,</i>   | • <i>bonespo</i> : refers to content that glorifies ex-   | 1026 |
| 985 | <i>foodisthenemy, healthyliving, intermittentfast-</i>  | treme thinness by focusing on images of                   | 1027 |
| 986 | <i>ing, iwillbeskinny, juicecleanse, ketodiet, losing-</i>  | prominent bones.  | 1028 |
| 987 | <i>weight, lowcalrestriction, meanspo, midriff, ozem-</i>   |   |      |
| 988 | <i>pic, proana, proanatips, redbracetpro, semaglu-</i>  | • <i>promia</i> : the promotion of bulimia-related be-    | 1029 |
| 989 | <i>tide, skinnycheck, slimmingworld, sweetspo, thigh-</i>   | haviors, often found in harmful online com-               | 1030 |
| 990 | <i>gapworkout, thinspo, thinspoa, watercleanse, we-</i>   | munities.   | 1031 |
| 991 | <i>govy, weightlossjourney, weightlossmotivation,</i>   |   |      |



|      |   |      |  |
|------|---|------|--|
| 1032 | <b>A.2 Profiling Communities</b>                            |      |  |
| 1033 | The statistics of the top 20 largest user clusters          |      |  |
| 1034 | detected by Louvain modularity maximization are             |      |  |
| 1035 | shown in Table 3. The word clouds of tweets in              |      |  |
| 1036 | these 20 clusters are shown in Figure 6. The retweet        |      |  |
| 1037 | network, with users from different clusters showing         |      |  |
| 1038 | different colors, is shown in Figure 7.                     |      |  |
| 1039 | To profile discussions, we provide a random sample          |      |  |
| 1040 | of 200 posts from each user cluster to GPT-4                |      |  |
| 1041 | with the prompt: “Given this list of posts, summarize       |      |  |
| 1042 | the main ideas in 1 sentence”. We observe                   |      |  |
| 1043 | that using different random samples of posts leads          |      |  |
| 1044 | to substantially similar summaries. After reviewing         |      |  |
| 1045 | generated summaries, we note significant thematic           |      |  |
| 1046 | and content overlaps and group the clusters                 |      |  |
| 1047 | based on their common topics of discussion into             |      |  |
| 1048 | clusters: <i>Pro-ED, Keto &amp; Diet, Body Image, Anti-</i> |      |  |
| 1049 | <i>ED, Healthy Lifestyle &amp; Weight Loss, Weight Loss</i> |      |  |
| 1050 | <i>Drugs</i> , and <i>spam</i> (not included).              |      |  |
| 1051 | Members of clusters 0, 7, 8, and 9 use “edtw”               |      |  |
| 1052 | to self-identify as part of the ED community, and           |      |  |
| 1053 | their posts promote disordered behaviors. Interestingly,    |      |  |
| 1054 | members of clusters 8 and 9 post in Spanish and             |      |  |
| 1055 | Portuguese, respectively. They are also placed              |      |  |
| 1056 | close to pro-ED clusters 0, 7 in Figure 7. Cluster 2,       |      |  |
| 1057 | although also uses “edtw” label, is well separated          |      |  |
| 1058 | from the rest. This cluster takes a critical—anti-          |      |  |
| 1059 | ED—stance on ED, as seen from the summary in                |      |  |
| 1060 | Table 4.  |      |  |
| 1061 | The remaining clusters are loosely connected in             |      |  |
| 1062 | the retweet network and less insular than the pro-          |      |  |
| 1063 | ED cluster. Clusters 1, 15, 16, 18 discuss the risks        |      |  |
| 1064 | and benefits of the keto diet; clusters 3, 6 and 19         |      |  |
| 1065 | focus on issues surrounding the use of weight loss          |      |  |
| 1066 | drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy; Clusters 4, 13, 17           |      |  |
| 1067 | examine issues of healthy lifestyle and weight loss,        |      |  |
| 1068 | while clusters 5, 10 cover body image topics, like          |      |  |
| 1069 | body positivity and self-acceptance. Clusters 11,           |      |  |
| 1070 | 12, and 14 are on other random issues not relevant          |      |  |
| 1071 | to ED, as can be observed from word clouds and              |      |  |
| 1072 | thus we exclude them in our subsequent analysis.            |      |  |
| 1073 | <b>B Aligning LLMs</b>                                      |      |  |
| 1074 | <b>B.1 Demonstration Template for LLM</b>                   |      |  |
| 1075 | <b>finetuning</b>   |      |  |
| 1076 | The instructions for finetuning LLMs are shown in           |      |  |
| 1077 | Table 5. For tweet generation demonstrations, each          |      |  |
| 1078 | tweet is paired with a randomly sampled instruction         |      |  |
| 1079 | from the table. An example prompt template is               |      |  |
| 1080 | shown below. More demonstrations for different              |      |  |
| 1081 | communities are shown in Table 6.                           |      |  |
|      | Instruction: What would you tweet?                          | 1082 |  |
|      | Response: {Tweet}   | 1083 |  |
|      | <b>C Assessing Alignment</b>                                | 1084 |  |
|      | <b>C.1 Topics for Creating Synthetic Tweets</b>             | 1085 |  |
|      | The 27 topics used for creating the synthetic tweets        | 1086 |  |
|      | are: <i>thinspo, fitspo, bonespo, deathspo, caloric</i>     | 1087 |  |
|      | <i>restriction, meanspo, ozempic, wegovy, fatspo, fat-</i>  | 1088 |  |
|      | <i>phobia, thighgap, caloric counting, purging, food</i>    | 1089 |  |
|      | <i>rules, extreme diet, food fear, hiding food, fast-</i>   | 1090 |  |
|      | <i>ing, starving, steroid, excessive exercising, body</i>   | 1091 |  |
|      | <i>dysmorphia, working out, anorexia, bulimia, or-</i>      | 1092 |  |
|      | <i>thorexia, binge eating.</i>                              | 1093 |  |
|      | The number of tweets mentioning the topics for              | 1094 |  |
|      | each community is shown in Table 7.                         | 1095 |  |
|      | <b>C.2 Prompt Template for Tweet Generation</b>             | 1096 |  |
|      | <b>by RAG LLM</b>   | 1097 |  |
|      | An example prompt template is shown below.                  | 1098 |  |
|      | You’re part of an online community now. To                  | 1099 |  |
|      | help you describe this online community,                    | 1100 |  |
|      | here are the tweets made by members in                      | 1101 |  |
|      | this community about the topic of {topic}.                  | 1102 |  |
|      | Tweet 1: {tweet_1}  | 1103 |  |
|      | Tweet 2: {tweet_1}  | 1104 |  |
|      | ...   | 1105 |  |
|      | Tweet 250: {tweet_250}                                      | 1106 |  |
|      | What would you tweet about {topic}? Learn                   | 1107 |  |
|      | the ideas and mindset of the community                      | 1108 |  |
|      | from these tweets and speak like a member                   | 1109 |  |
|      | from this community. Only generate one                      | 1110 |  |
|      | tweet.  | 1111 |  |
|      | <b>C.3 Demonstration Template for Tweet</b>                 | 1112 |  |
|      | <b>Origin Classification</b>                                | 1113 |  |
|      | Instruction: From these communities: Pro                    | 1114 |  |
|      | Eating Disorder, Keto & Diet, Body Image,                   | 1115 |  |
|      | Anti Eating Disorder, Healthy lifestyle &                   | 1116 |  |
|      | Weight Loss, and Weight Loss Drugs, which                   | 1117 |  |
|      | community does this Tweet belong to?                        | 1118 |  |
|      | {Tweet}   | 1119 |  |
|      | Response: {community_name}                                  | 1120 |  |
|      | <b>D Screening Online Communities</b>                       | 1121 |  |
|      | <b>D.1 Stanford-Washington University Eating</b>            | 1122 |  |
|      | <b>Disorder (SWED) 3.0 Screener</b>                         | 1123 |  |
|      | The 11 questions in the questionnaire are shown             | 1124 |  |
|      | below.  | 1125 |  |
|      | 1. Are you currently in treatment for an eating             | 1126 |  |
|      | disorder?   | 1127 |  |

| Comm        | 0       | 1       | 2      | 3       | 4       | 5      | 6      | 7      | 8      | 9      |           |
|-------------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|
| # of users  | 61,954  | 24,400  | 21,887 | 20,631  | 9,901   | 9,031  | 9,000  | 8,084  | 7,702  | 7,020  |           |
| # of tweets | 805,249 | 112,674 | 32,883 | 37,788  | 193,348 | 24,395 | 21,369 | 82,702 | 70,764 | 71,970 |           |
| Comm        | 10      | 11      | 12     | 13      | 14      | 15     | 16     | 17     | 18     | 19     | total     |
| # of users  | 6,477   | 6,158   | 5,181  | 4,528   | 3,682   | 3,672  | 3,360  | 3,163  | 3,086  | 2,865  | 221,887   |
| # of tweets | 15,796  | 9,254   | 7,019  | 103,177 | 260,971 | 5,338  | 4,881  | 5,065  | 4,612  | 7,021  | 1,876,276 |

Table 3: Number of users (community size) and tweets in the top 20 largest user clusters respectively and in total.

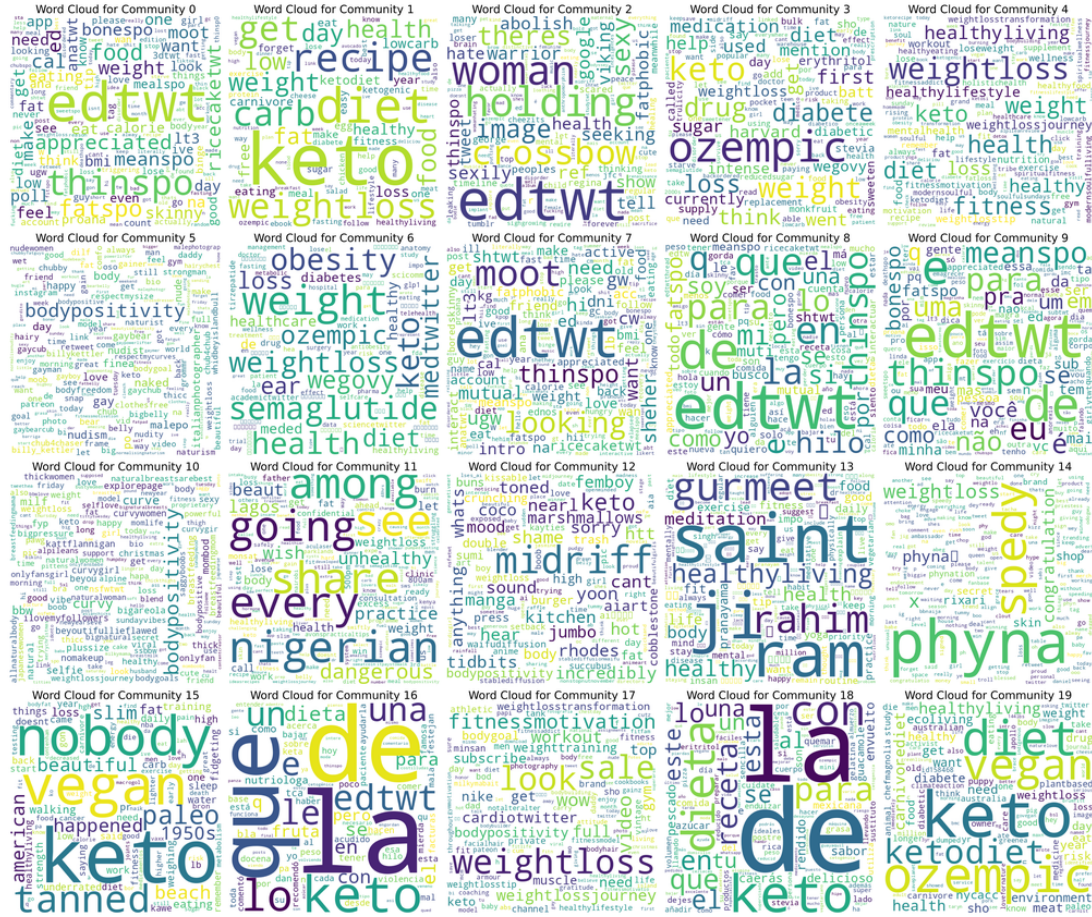


Figure 6: Wordclouds of popular terms appearing in the original tweets posted within each user cluster.

|      |  |   |      |
|------|--|---|------|
| 1128 | (a) No   | (b) I worry a little less than other people   | 1139 |
| 1129 | (b) Yes  | (c) I worry about the same as other people    | 1140 |
| 1130 | (c) Not currently, but I have been in the past   | (d) I worry a little more than other people   | 1141 |
| 1131 | 2. What was your lowest weight in the past year, | (e) I worry a lot more than other people      | 1142 |
| 1132 | including today, in pounds?                      | 6. How afraid are you of gaining 3 pounds?    | 1143 |
| 1133 | 3. What is your current weight in pounds?        | (a) Not afraid of gaining                     | 1144 |
| 1134 | 4. What is your current height in inches?        | (b) Slightly afraid of gaining                | 1145 |
| 1135 | 5. How much more or less do you feel you worry   | (c) Moderately afraid of gaining              | 1146 |
| 1136 | about your weight and body shape than other      | (d) Very afraid of gaining                    | 1147 |
| 1137 | people your age?                                 | (e) Terrified of gaining                      | 1148 |
| 1138 | (a) I worry a lot less than other people         | 7. When was the last time you went on a diet? | 1149 |
|      |  | (a) I have never been on a diet               | 1150 |

| Community Tag                   | Summary of Community Discussions   | User Cluster ID |
|---------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Pro Eating Disorder             | This community revolves around the online eating disorder community (edwt), sharing tips, thinspo (thin inspiration), meanspo (mean inspiration), fasting strategies, and discussing body image and weight loss goals, often in a way that promotes disordered eating behaviors.   | 0,7,8,9         |
| Keto & Diet                     | This community focuses on a range of topics related to ketogenic diets, weight loss, metabolic health, and low-carb recipes, with discussions on the effectiveness of keto for various health conditions, debates on prescribing obesity drugs to children, and personal testimonials about the benefits of a keto.            | 1,15,16,18      |
| Body Image                      | This community dives into a variety of personal updates, including fitness activities, body positivity, nudism, modeling, and social interactions, with some tweets promoting content or expressing motivational thoughts.   | 5, 10           |
| Anti Eating Disorder            | This community expresses strong negative sentiments towards "edwt" (presumably "eating disorder Twitter"), criticizing it for being toxic, fatphobic, and harmful, with calls to abolish it and stop interacting with its content.   | 2               |
| Healthy Lifestyle & Weight Loss | This community covers a variety of health and wellness topics, including weight loss methods, dietary plans, fitness advice, healthy eating, keto diet, fasting, moxibustion, and motivational messages for maintaining a healthy lifestyle.   | 4,13,17         |
| Weight Loss Drugs               | This community discusses the controversial use of the diabetes drug Ozempic for weight loss, the impact of its shortage on diabetic patients, the cost of the medication, and related topics such as body positivity, keto diets, and the role of influencers and celebrities in promoting certain health trends and products. | 3,6,19          |

Table 4: Summary of posts in the communities with GPT-4. Similar communities are merged.

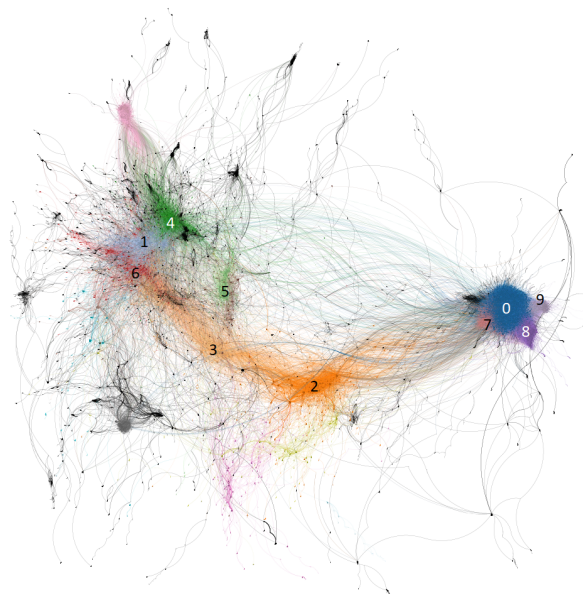


Figure 7: Retweet network, where nodes are individual users and edges indicate the retweeting activities. Node colors represent different user clusters identified by the Louvain modularity method.

- (a) My weight is not important compared to other things in my life 1159
- (b) My weight is a little more important than some other things 1160
- (c) My weight is more important than most, but not all, things in my life 1161
- (d) My weight is the most important thing in my life 1162

- 9. Do you ever feel fat? 1163
- (a) Never 1164
- (b) Rarely 1165
- (c) Sometimes 1166
- (d) Often 1167
- (e) Always 1168

- 10. In the past 3 months, how many times have you had a sense of loss of control AND you also ate what most people would regard as an unusually large amount of food at one time, defined as definitely more than most people would eat under similar circumstances? 1169
- 1170
- 1171
- 1172
- 1173
- 1174
- 1175
- 1176
- 1177
- 1178

- 11. In the past 3 months, how many times have you done any of the following as a means to control your weight and shape: 1179
- (a) Made yourself throw up? 1180
- (b) Used diuretics or laxatives? 1181
- (c) Exercised excessively? i.e. pushed yourself very hard; had to stick to a specific exercise schedule no matter what 1182
- 1183
- 1184
- 1185
- 1186

- 1151 (b) I was on a diet about one year ago
- 1152 (c) I was on a diet about 6 months ago
- 1153 (d) I was on a diet about 3 months ago
- 1154 (e) I was on a diet about 1 month ago
- 1155 (f) I was on a diet less than 1 month ago
- 1156 (g) I'm on a diet now
- 1157 8. Compared to other things in your life, how
- 1158 important is your weight to you?



| Index | Instruction  |
|-------|--|
| 1     | What would you tweet?  |
| 2     | What tweet would you send out?   |
| 3     | What’s your tweet today?   |
| 4     | What would you want to tweet about?                                    |
| 5     | What’s on your mind to tweet?  |
| 6     | What tweet would you drop?   |
| 7     | What would you say?  |
| 8     | What’s your tweet?   |
| 9     | Tweet something.   |
| 10    | What would you tweet?  |
| 11    | What kind of tweet would you send out to engage with fellow members?   |
| 12    | Draft a tweet that captures the interests and spirit of the community. |
| 13    | Craft a relatable tweet that resonates with members.                   |
| 14    | Share a tweet that sparks conversation on relevant topics.             |
| 15    | Compose a tweet that reflects the shared voice and passions.           |
| 16    | Author an insightful tweet that inspires dialogue among members.       |
| 17    | Tweet something that provokes intellectual discourse.                  |
| 18    | Tweet an observation or perspective that contributes meaningfully.     |
| 19    | Craft a tweet that elevates the ongoing conversations.                 |
| 20    | Compose a tweet that encourages enriching engagement.                  |

Table 5: Instructions used to finetune the LLMs.

|      |   |  |      |
|------|---|--|------|
| 1187 | – for example even when you were sick-                | it a valuable instrument for identifying at-risk in- | 1212 |
| 1188 | /injured or if it meant missing a class               | dividuals (Killen et al., 1994, 1996; Taylor et al., | 1213 |
| 1189 | or other important obligation; felt com-              | 2006). Our work deploys this questionnaire to gain   | 1214 |
| 1190 | pelled to exercise                                    | insights into body-related concerns of members of    | 1215 |
| 1191 | (d) Fasted? i.e. intentionally not eating any-        | online communities.                                  | 1216 |
| 1192 | thing at all for at least 24 hours in an              |  |      |
| 1193 | attempt to prevent weight gain (e.g., that            | <b>D.3 Diagnostic Criteria</b>                       | 1217 |
| 1194 | is feared as a result of binge eating) or to          | C1 is a numerical score, the Weight Concerns Scale   | 1218 |
| 1195 | lose weight   | (WCS) (Killen et al., 1993) - a metric that measures | 1219 |
| 1196 | 12. Have you experienced significant weight loss      | concerns about weight and shape. This criterion      | 1220 |
| 1197 | (or are at a low weight for your age and height)      | composes answers from questions 5 to 9 in SWED,      | 1221 |
| 1198 | but are not overly concerned with the size and        | maps the options to numerical values to a 0-100      | 1222 |
| 1199 | shape of your body?                                   | scale, and calculates the average score across the 5 | 1223 |
| 1200 | (a) Yes   | questions. The higher the WCS score is, the higher   | 1224 |
| 1201 | (b) No  | the risk factor for body and shape concerns.         | 1225 |
| 1202 | <b>D.2 Weight Concerns Scale</b>                      | C2, C3, and C4 are boolean values, and being         | 1226 |
| 1203 | The Weight Concerns Scale (WCS) (Killen et al.,       | true implies a higher risk of EDs. C2 is True if the | 1227 |
| 1204 | 1993) is a brief, validated psychometric instrument   | model responds “more/most important” (options        | 1228 |
| 1205 | designed to measure concerns about weight and         | c or d) to Q8 “Compared to other things in your      | 1229 |
| 1206 | body shape, fear of gaining weight, dieting history,  | life, how important is your weight to you?”. C3 is   | 1230 |
| 1207 | and feelings of fatness. The scale was created to     | True if the model responds “moderately afraid” or    | 1231 |
| 1208 | assess risk factors for ED and has demonstrated       | more (options c, d, or e) to Q6: “How afraid are     | 1232 |
| 1209 | excellent stability and sensitivity to treatment dif- | you of gaining 3 pounds?”. C4 is True if the model   | 1233 |
| 1210 | ferences. Longitudinal studies have shown that        | responds “Yes” at least 3 times to Q11: “In the past | 1234 |
| 1211 | high WCS scores predict the onset of ED, making       | 3 months, how many times have you done any of        | 1235 |
|      |   | the following as a means to control your weight      | 1236 |
|      |   | and shape: a. Made yourself throw up? b. Used        | 1237 |



| Community         | Instruction                         | Response   |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Pro-ED            | What would you tweet?               | most of the time the only thing i want in the whole world is to be skinny and lose weight                                |
| Keto & Diet       | What tweet would you send out?      | ready to jumpstart your weight loss journey? Try these tips to help you lose weight in a month                           |
| Body Image        | What's your tweet today?            | everyone has something about their body they 're not completely happy with. Don't focus on that! Love the body you have! |
| Anti-ED           | What would you want to tweet about? | do not follow me if you're on edtw. I don't know how many times I have to say this                                       |
| Healthy Lifestyle | What's on your mind to tweet?       | we don't stop exercising because we grow old, we grow old because we stop exercising.                                    |
| Weight Loss Drugs | What tweet would you drop?          | are our keto diet pills effective and safe to use? The truth about keto diet pills benefits, risks, and effectiveness    |

Table 6: Demonstration examples for LLM finetuning for different communities.

1238 diuretics or laxatives? c. Exercised excessively? d.  
1239 Fasted?"

1240 **D.4 Prompt Template for SWED Question**  
1241 **Answering**

1242 {Question}  
1243 Respond to the following question only  
1244 with the letter at the beginning of each  
1245 option or with a number.

1246 **D.5 LLM Responses to SWED Questions**

1247 Responses from the finetuned LLMs to SWED  
1248 questions are shown in Table 8.

| Topic                | Pro-ED | Keto and Diet | Body Image | Anti-ED | Healthy lifestyle and Weight Loss | Weight Loss Drugs |
|----------------------|--------|---------------|------------|---------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| thinspo              | 20     | 0             | 0          | 24      | 0                                 | 2                 |
| fitspo               | 0      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| bonespo              | 4      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| deathspo             | 0      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| caloric restriction  | 0      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| calorie counting     | 0      | 0             | 0          | 1       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| purging              | 0      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| food rules           | 0      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| extreme diet         | 0      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| food fear            | 0      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| hiding food          | 0      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| fasting              | 0      | 1             | 0          | 1       | 0                                 | 2                 |
| starving             | 1      | 0             | 1          | 1       | 0                                 | 1                 |
| steroid              | 0      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| meanspo              | 0      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| ozempic              | 0      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| wegovy               | 0      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| fatspo               | 2      | 0             | 0          | 3       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| fatphobia            | 0      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| thigh gap            | 4      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| excessive exercising | 0      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| body dysmorphia      | 0      | 0             | 1          | 1       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| working out          | 1      | 2             | 2          | 0       | 0                                 | 1                 |
| anorexia             | 0      | 0             | 0          | 2       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| bulimia              | 0      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| orthorexia           | 0      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |
| binge eating         | 1      | 0             | 0          | 0       | 0                                 | 0                 |

Table 7: Number of tweets mentioning topic keyword(s) from each community.

| Question | Pro ED | Keto & Diet | Body Image | Anti ED | Healthy Lifestyle & Weight Loss | Weight Loss Drugs |
|----------|--------|-------------|------------|---------|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| 5        | b      | c           | b          | a       | a                               | b                 |
| 6        | c      | c           | a          | c       | a                               | b                 |
| 7        | c      | a           | b          | b       | a                               | a                 |
| 8        | c      | c           | b          | a       | c                               | b                 |
| 9        | c      | a           | a          | a       | a                               | a                 |
| 11a      | c      | a           | a          | c       | a                               | a                 |
| 11b      | c      | a           | a          | c       | a                               | a                 |
| 11c      | a      | b           | b          | b       | b                               | a                 |
| 11d      | a      | b           | b          | b       | b                               | a                 |

Table 8: Responses from the finetuned LLMs to the questions in SWED that are used to compute the diagnosis criteria. The responses displayed are the majority of answers for each question.