

# Exporting Predatory Food and Body Advertisement

Philip Stupar – AP/SOWK 2025: Introduction to Eating Disorders

## Research Question



Has globalization enabled the transference of predatory food and body-image advertisement outside of its 'Western' basis?

## Abstract



Though developed and initially utilized in the 'West', corporate advertising methods cultivating and exploiting manufactured food and body-related insecurities in the 'West' have seemingly undergone a process of global exportation.

As the research demonstrates, a transferrable five-category messaging model encompassing food, gender, and body insecurities is identified through its presence in the USA and subsequent transference globally. Its influence on rates of disordered eating and negative body perceptions becomes visible in parts of East-Asia and the Pacific affected by "westernization".

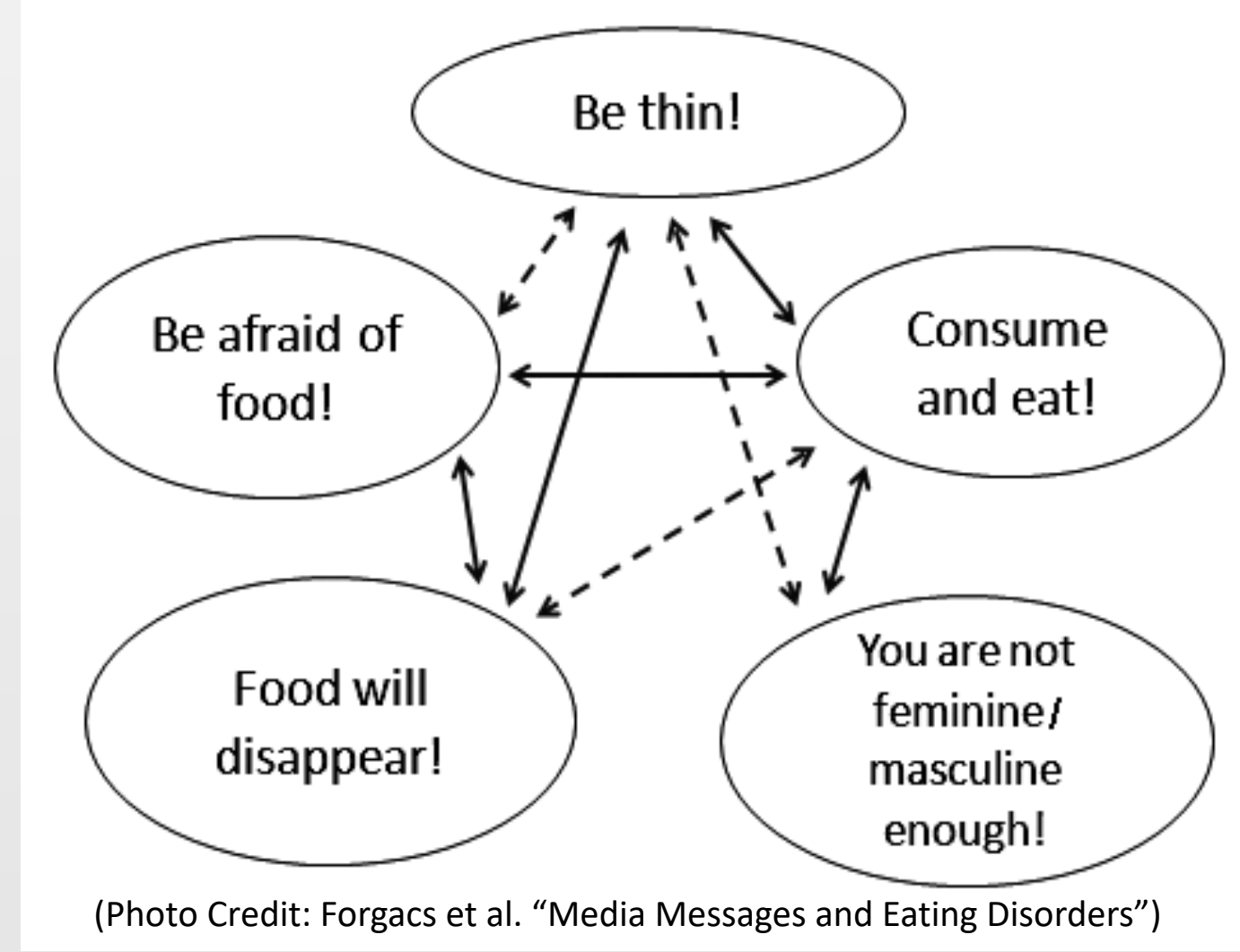
An acutely effective reproduction of the five-category messaging took place in the country of Fiji, wherein the statistical rates of both medically diagnosed disordered eating and reportedly negative body perceptions, catalyzed by the introduction of American satellite television programming, were sharply elevated past their previously minimal rates.

## Methodology



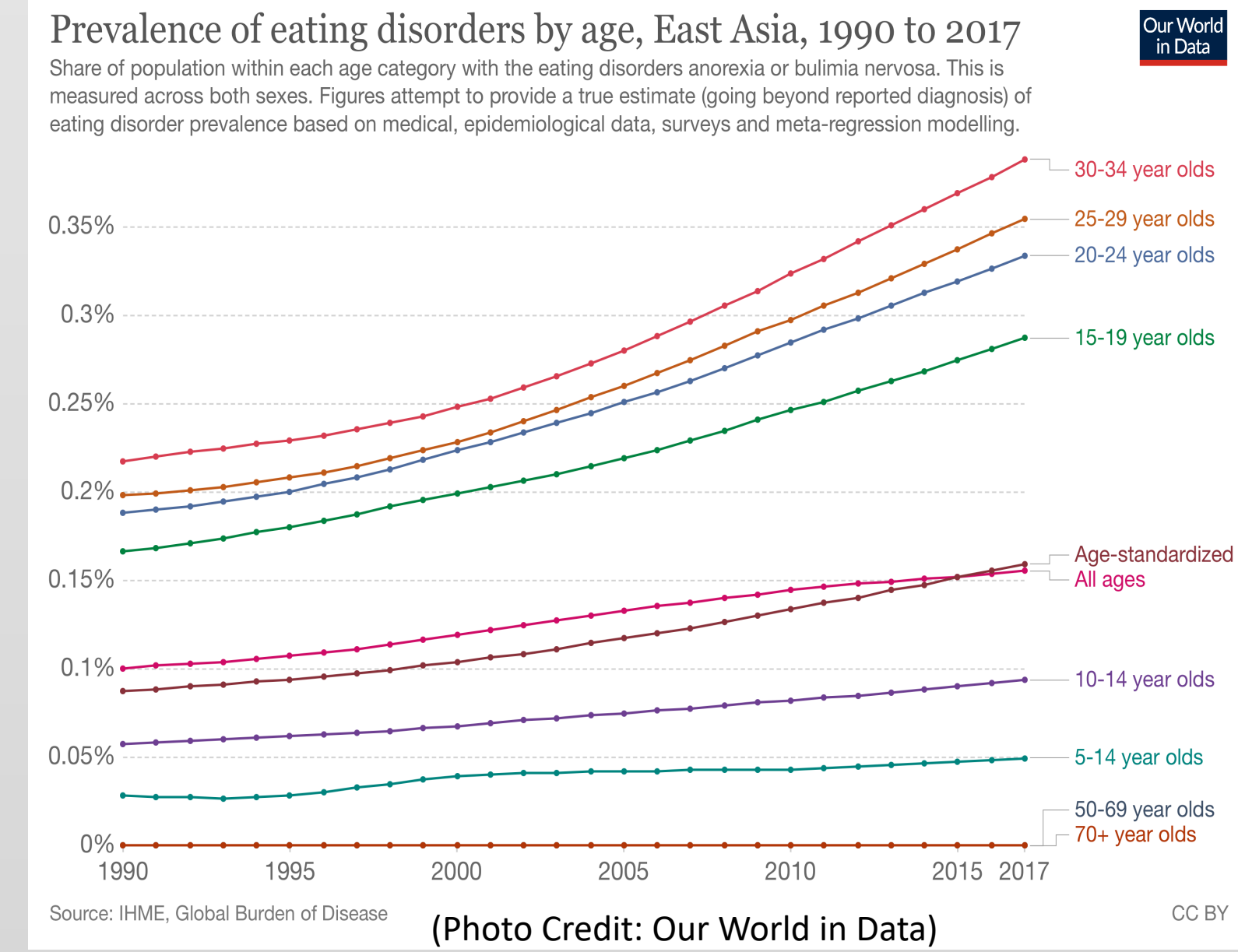
The focus of the research was to conduct a sociological analysis of the available quantitative data involving rising rates of disordered eating and negative body perceptions in America, select East Asian countries, and Fiji, given the established presence of "westernization" and one or more negative food and body-image related messaging categories.

"The five-category food and body-image messaging model"



(Photo Credit: Forgacs et al. "Media Messages and Eating Disorders")

"Increasing prevalence of eating disorders in East Asia"



(Photo Credit: Our World in Data)

"Tracking Fijian rates of disordered eating and body image dissatisfaction vis-à-vis TV exposure"

	1995 Sample < 1 month TV exposure (n=63)	1998 Sample > 3 years TV exposure (n=65)	P value
Mean age, years (s.d.)	17.3 (0.9)	16.9 (1.1)	NS
Mean BMI (s.d.)	24.5 (3.4)	24.9 (2.5)	NS
Household ownership of a television, n (%)	26 (41.3)	46 (70.8)	0.001
Bingeing, n (%)	5 (7.9)	3 (4.6)	NS
EAT-26 > 20, n (%)	8 (12.7)	19 (29.2)	0.030
Some induced-vomiting to control weight, n (%)	0 (0)	7 (11.3)	0.013

(Photo Credit: Becker et al. "Eating behaviors and attitudes following prolonged exposure to television among ethnic Fijian adolescent girls")

## Results



- ❑ The research conducted found that American diet and weight loss-related industrial valuation grew by multiple billions of dollars by 1996, notably utilizing many of the listed food and body-image related messaging categories to help foster a profitable culture of fear and dissatisfaction around food and body-image in the USA.
- ❑ The transference of dieting, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating within broader East Asian societies scored multiple attributions to globalization, with many scholars noting that it was a historically western phenomenon prior to cultural exportation, highlighting the key link between "eating disorders and images of thinness portrayed in the media" alongside an often-added notation regarding westernization's influence on domestic media.
- ❑ The 'Fijian Example' presented a unique and shocking case study, wherein the island of Fiji went from a single documented instance of a diagnosed eating disorder, prior to the mid-1990s, to experiencing an exponential rise in diagnosed eating disorders and increasingly negative body-perceptions among younger Fijian women with the wide-scale adoption of American satellite television programming.

## Implications



These findings imply the transference of disordered eating and negative body-image perceptions may be facilitated by an environment of deregulated globalization working in tandem with previously established negative food and body-related messaging patterns. Particularly in the Fijian example, healthy cultural food and body norms are under constant threat of subversion so long as the application of unregulated 'Western' programming is maintained.