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How Does Parental Concern Over Child Weight Influence Parental Feeding Practices?

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This study examined the association of child weight status and parental feeding practices. We tested the hypotheses: (1) Associations between child weight and parental feeding practices are mediated by parental concern about child weight. (2) This association differs in African American and Latino parents. Cross-sectional study included 250 low-income parents of 3–5 y. old children. Participants provided demographics, anthropometric data and completed the Preschooler Feeding Questionnaire (Baughcum *et al*, 2001). Factor analysis of questionnaire items determined 8 feeding practices factors (FPF) according to loading. Regression models predicted each FPF separately. Mediation models followed the Preacher & Hayes method of testing the mediation effect. There were significant relationships between child's BMI and difficulty in child feeding, concern about child being overweight, concern about child being underweight, child centric feeding and use of rewards, and age inappropriate feeding. Latino parents exercised higher use of food to calm the child, child centric feeding and use of rewards, and age inappropriate feeding compared to African American parents. In mediation models, parental concern about child being underweight mediated the association between child's BMI and difficulty in child feeding, child centric feeding and use of rewards, and age inappropriate feeding. Results support a model of responsive feeding practices where parents exercise certain practices influenced by their concern about their child weight status.