

Lora, K., C. Quesada, D. B. Wakefield, A. M. Ferris. (2012). Age of the Caregiver Is Associated with More Desirable Feeding Practices. Proceedings of International Society for Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity (ISBNPA) 2012 Pre-Conference Workshop, May. 20-22, 2012, Houston, TX.

TITLE: Age of the Caregiver Is Associated with More Desirable Feeding Practices

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PURPOSE: We examined parental characteristics associated with desirable feeding practices. The research question was: Do parental feeding practices associated with desirable behaviors during feeding interactions vary by parental demographics?

METHODS: At baseline and 6 months, 300 low-income parents of 3–5 year old children in a longitudinal study completed the Preschool Feeding Questionnaire (Baughcum *et al*, 2001). We selected 10 questions assessing feeding practices (FP) from the domains: pushing the child to eat more (PC), use of food to calm the child (UF), structure during feeding interaction (SF) and one question about child centric feeding and use of rewards (CF). A composite score was calculated by averaging the responses to the FP questions, and dividing into tertiles. Desirable FP were defined as having low scores on PC, UF, and CF and high scores on SF (reverse scored for consistency). Chi-square analyses assessed associations between FP and parental age, marital status, indicators of SES (participation in WIC and SNAP) and ethnicity/race.

RESULTS: At baseline, significant differences in FP were found for ethnicity/race, parent age, and marital status and SES. However, after controlling for SES only caregiver's age (older than 35 y) was significant. At 6 months, after controlling for SES, the association between FP and parental age remained significant.

DISCUSSION: Caregivers who are older seem to exercise more desirable feeding practices by pressuring the child less to eat more, higher monitoring during feeding interactions, and becoming less indulgent.