The role of parental self-efficacy, parental feeding practices and home food environment in influencing preschool aged children's diet.

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Statement of Originality and Declarations

*This dissertation contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my dissertation, when deposited in the University Library***, *being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.*

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Abstract

Background: Significant health consequences in adulthood and childhood are related to poor diet quality (National Health and Medical Research Centre, 2003a). Dietary patterns developed in childhood often persist into adulthood (Lau, Quadrel & Hartman, 1990) and parents are among the most important influences on the development of dietary patterns in childhood (Birch & Fisher, 1998). This study aimed to explore relationships between parental factors that impact upon child dietary intakes. *Method:* Cross-sectional data was collected by telephone interview for 202 parents of children aged 3-5 attending preschools in the Greater Newcastle Area, New South Wales, Australia. Multiple mediation analyses (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) were conducted to examine for indirect and direct effects of parental self-efficacy for managing child diet, through availability and accessibility of fruits vegetables and other foods and use of parental control strategies on four child dietary intakes (fruit and vegetables, fat from dairy, sweetened beverages and non-core foods). In addition, parent socio-economic status and child gender were examined as potential moderators. *Results:* This study found significant mediation effects of fruit and vegetable availability and parental control strategies on the relationships between parental self-efficacy for managing child diet and child fruit and vegetable intake and non-core food intakes. Moderation effects were found for the relationships between child non-core food intake with parental use of restriction and parental self-efficacy respectively. Surprisingly, fruit and vegetable availability were significant moderators rather than the expected parent and child demographic factors of socio-economic status or child gender. *Conclusions:* This study provides support for significant direct and indirect effects of parental self-efficacy on child intakes of fruit and vegetables and non-core foods. Furthermore, moderation effects found for child non-core food intake are supportive of a displacement effect of child fruit and vegetable intake on non-core food consumption. Parental self-efficacy is an important target for family based interventions to improve child diet and prevent poor dietary outcomes.