Reviewer's report

Title: Children eat their school lunch too quickly: an exploratory study of the effect on food intake

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Reviewer: Cees de Graaf

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Zandian et al;
Children eat their school lunch too quickly: an exploratory study of the effect on food intake

General comments
This is the third time that I see this paper, and I am slowly starting to understand what the results are of the two studies. The results of the first study are clear now. However, the results of the second study are not communicated in an easy accessible way.

If I understand it correctly, average food intake in girls is not affected by the experimental condition (Table 2). Variability in intake with girls increases dramatically with the school lunch and increased rate condition. Boys ate more during school lunch (372 g) compared to control (289 g), and when the eating rate was increased (372 g) compared to control (289 g). In the unchanged (287 g) and decreased eating rate (300 g), intakes were comparable to control (289 g). One cannot argue with the data, so I think that this results should be communicated more clearly.

Eating certain foods normally occurs in a typical with a typical eating rate. For example, I would think that eating an apple will naturally occur at a rate of about 50 g /min, whereas drinking apple juice will have a eating rate that may be 10 times as high. To me, it seems not so easy to increase this rate with 30% without affecting a normal pattern of eating. A double eating rate may produce quite some discomfort with some people, does it not? I would think that this is a limitation of the study, which makes the interpretation of some results more equivocal.

Specific comments

Abstract:
The main results of study 2 are not well represented in the abstract. One cannot judge the main results very clearly from the abstract.

Introduction.
Introduction only refers to study 1, and does not give a hint what is coming next after study 1. Please introduce what is coming in the paper.
Methods and results of study 1 are generally clear.

Introduction to study is OK.

Methods study 2.

Is the meal referred to at lines 175-180 the control meal?

With the school lunch four children ate at each table and there was only one hidden weighing scale; were the food intakes of the other children also measured or not?

Results

The results is a kind of mix of results with comments and implicit reasonings; this makes it very difficult to follow. It is only now after reading this five of six times that I understand what you mean.

Line 227/235; it is not necessary to repeat the aim. Could you not state that:
Table 1 shows that ….
Table 2 shows very clearly that for girls that there is on average no effect of experimental condition on intake, whereas for boys there is.

Line 260; This seems to suddenly change the primary outcome of the study. This is a discomforting post-hoc way of reasoning. I think that you should bring this differently, and organize it in a separate section of the results.

Discussion

The discussion does not discuss the change in primary outcome measure. There is no discussion on the sharp increase in variability with the girls, also no explanation of the surprisingly high correlations between the school lunch and increased eating condition in the girls.