Reviewer’s report

Title: Social disparities in food preparation behaviours: a DEDIPAC study

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Reviewer: Christina Vogel

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript describes socioeconomic differences for men and women using three different measures of socio-economic position (SEP): educational attainment, income and occupation. A strength of this study is the large sample size and the use of three different measures of SEP. However, the manuscript in its current form offers little in addition to what is already known about SEP and food preparation behaviours and additional details about some variables is required. This manuscript is well written however, some improvements could be made to enhance readability. I have list below some major and minor comments about the manuscript.

Major:

1. A major limitation of this manuscript is that it offers little in addition to what is already known about SEP and food preparation behaviours. The larger study collected dietary data and including this in the study would significantly improve the value of this work to the broader literature. Could the authors indicate the reasons for which these dietary data were excluded from the analyses? The introduction section describes the socioeconomic disparities in dietary quality but the conceptual understanding of the relation between food preparation behaviours and SEP (and diet) generally but also specific food preparation behaviours and specific SEP measures could be enhanced to appropriately set up the hypotheses for the reader and would provide more structure for the discussion and could offer a more novel interpretation of the results.

2. The aims of the study could be more specific and the introduction improved to better lead to the aims. As described above, a clearer conceptual understanding of the pathways between SEP, food preparation behaviours and diet is needed. A definition of food preparation behaviours and its components would enhance the introduction and improve understanding of the methods. In addition greater justification for examining genders separately is needed and consideration of testing effect modification of gender is recommended.

3. A better description of some of variables, particularly the reliability (test-retest) and validity (even face validity) of the novel measures used is required. The cooking from scratch measure and occupation categorisation does appear to be measuring what one assumes was intended to be measured and the inconsistent results for these variables suggest this may be
the case. Could the authors explain the 'ready to cook' category in terms of nutrition? Ready to cook meat/poultry like chicken breasts or lean beef strips are of high nutrient value and very different to processed meat/poultry products like chicken nuggets or sausages. It appears that these types of products were treated the same. The novelty of this study could be improved if a composite measure of food preparation behaviours was considered, perhaps by using a data driven approach. This approach could potentially help to answer the current general aim of study better than the approach of separate analyses for each food prep variable which shows largely inconsistent results.

4. The manuscript is generally well written however it does need a thorough read through to correct minor grammatical errors. For example, the use of 'to him' throughout the methods is not common in English and could be rephrased to be more succinct.

Minor:

Abstract - line 44, the last past of this sentence is difficult to understand

Introduction - lines 94-99, more should be made of this to set up the aims of the study; need to define food preparation behaviours; set-up gender differences

Methods - More details about sampling of participants and type of the larger study (intervention, control) - move from later section (lines 197-198) to sample section early in the methods; sub-headings/ use of bold text throughout the food prep behaviours section would help readers; lines 143 and 164, specify the ten and the six and the dishes, pastries etc; line 194 qualify 'better'; justify categorisation of occupation currently this not ordinal as is usually the case - ? the value of this measure as a SEP measure (limitation in discussion noted); line211, change 'diploma' to 'qualification'

Results - describe demographic differences between completers and full sample and enhance description of demographic characteristics of study sample; including % and p-values would enhance the description of the results; add statistical tests used as footnote to tables; line 283 should be Table 3 not Table 4

Discussion - lines 315-317, very general interpretation more detailed interpretation needed, could be improved if hypothesis/aim was clearer; line 321, this does not seem to reflect the results - please correct; line 338, please clarify 'greater cultural capital'; some repetition of results in discussion - please address; line 380, 'do not' appears too strong here; greater interpretation of results is needed, particularly the consequences for dietary inequalities - more of the interpretation provided in the conclusion should be added to the discussion.
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An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English
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