

Serve it Here; Eat it There: Serving Off the Stove Results in Less Food Intake than Serving Off the Table

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Background

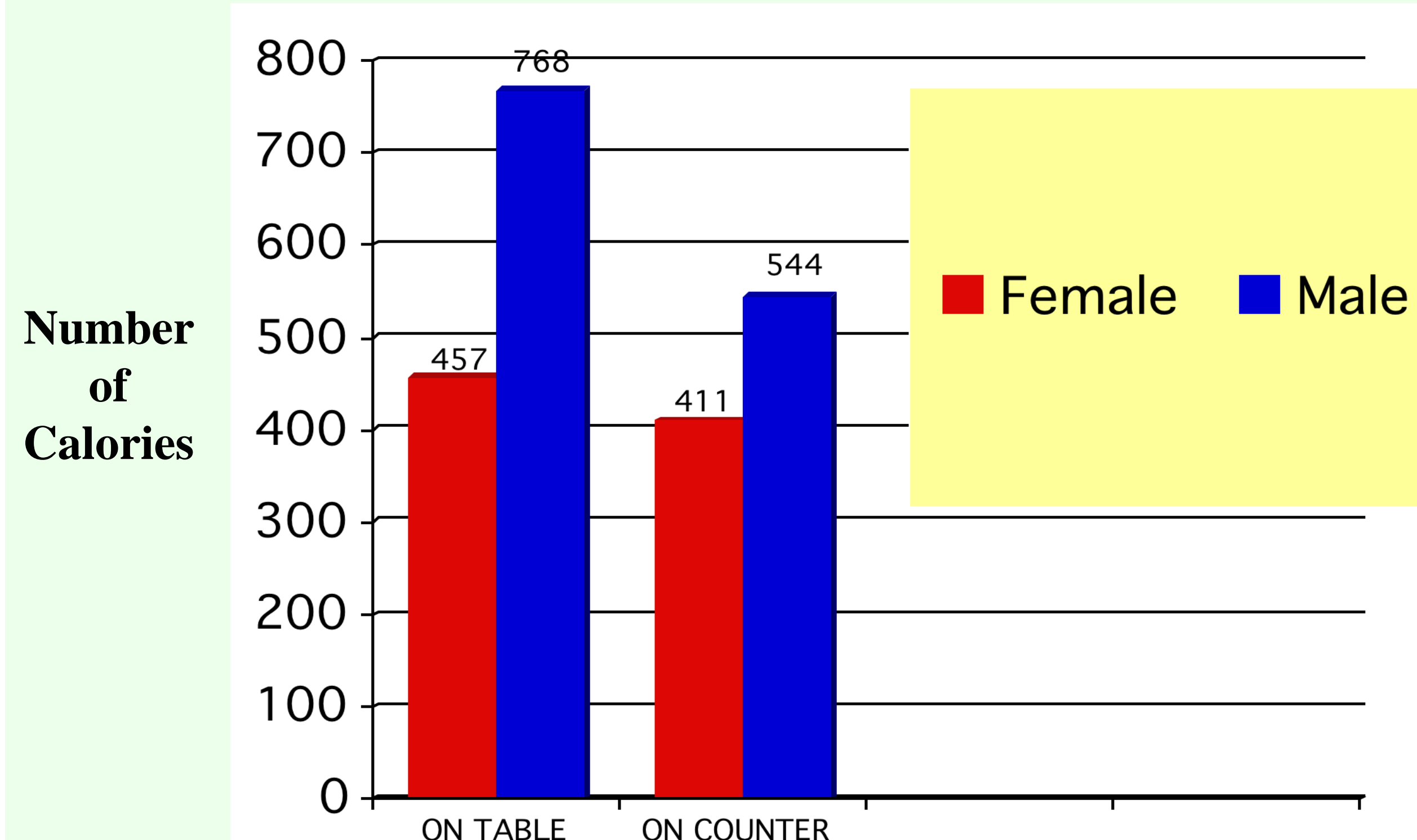
- Prior research indicates that when candy dishes were moved 6 feet away from the desks of office assistants, their average daily consumption of candy decreased by almost one-half. They reported that this was because distance led them to “pause” and reflect as to whether or not they were really hungry.
- Multiple portions (refills) is a reported contributor to overeating at meal time. Using the same reasoning as with the candy dishes, this research examines the following questions:
 1. Do people eat less when dinner is served off of the dinner table?
 2. Are proximate foods consumed more frequently because they are convenient, or because people lose track of how much they eat?

Partly because people lose track. We over-estimate our intake of foods that are less proximate, and underestimate those that are more proximate.

Method

- 78 university staff; groups of 3-4
- Pasta, apple sauce, and pudding were self-served from the counter, then a) left on the counter, or b) moved to the table
- Participants told to help themselves – 45 minutes at table
- Serving sizes, intake, and food waste were measured
- Participants also estimated calories & rated satiety

Figure 1: Men eat 41% more



Abstract

Multiple portions (refills) is a reported contributor to overeating at meal time. Using the same reasoning as with the candy dishes, a lunchtime lab experiment with university staff (n=78) was conducted to examine whether serving foods from the stove or kitchen counter, instead of at the table, would reduce the number of times an individual refilled his or her plate.

The results indicated that this “dish here; dine there” technique decreased food intake by 29% (P<.01) for men and 10% for women (P>.20).

Results

- Men ate 29% fewer total calories when serving bowls were moved from the table to the counter (p<.01)
 - Driven primarily by pasta intake (p<.01)
 - Directionally non-significant for apple sauce and pudding
- Women ate 10% more total calories (non-significant)
- No differences in estimated calories
- No differences in satiety ratings



Why Did This Happen?

- The less effortful it is to eat, the easier it was to forget how much they ate. When eating proximate food (food off the desk), the nearly instantaneous, indistinct eating episodes were inaccurately recalled.
- The more effortful it is to acquire food, the more salient individual acquisition episodes become.

The Bottom Line:

1. The proximity and visibility of a food can consistently increase intake.
2. We over-estimate our intake of foods that are less proximate, and underestimate our intake of those foods that are more proximate.

Implications:

For Dieters: Dieters need to take a food’s visibility and proximity into account when they try to estimate their prior consumption. Proximate food– say cookies in the cupboard versus those on the counter – may be over-consumed relative to what one might think (or recall).
Most importantly →move the food!!

For Researchers: When studying consumption data and diary panels, researchers need to **account for the visibility and proximity of foods**, because not doing so can lead to biased recall. One way to do this is to **ask people to rate the visibility and proximity of the foods under investigation**—these ratings can then be used as either covariates or as blocking or segmentation variables.

For Everyone: Encouragingly, if visibility and proximity increase the consumption of chocolate, this may also work for healthier foods, such as raw fruits or vegetables.
What makes the candy dish nutritionally dangerous, might bring the fruit bowl back in vogue.

References

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For more information or preprints, contact Brian Wansink (wansink@cornell.edu) or visit: www.FoodPsychology.Cornell.edu