Influence of Game Stimuli on Participant Snacking

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Electronic Game Play with Varying Stimuli is a pilot psychological study designed to measure the effects of game stimuli on participant eating patterns. Prior research on stimulus-affected eating includes a study done by Bodenlos and Wormuth (2013) that found that participants who watched a food-cooking show consumed more calories than participants who watched a nature show.

Participants
- 22 Georgia Southern students were recruited from the Psychology Department’s SONA system for class credit.

Apparatus
- In the study, participants are asked to play an electronic matching game on a Samsung Galaxy Tablet.

Procedure
- Participants play a game on the tablet for 10 minutes that involves either food stimuli (fruit) or non-food stimuli (jewels).
- Snacks (M&M’s, Skittles, and Pretzels) as well as a small cup of water are provided in pre-measured amounts (M&M’s and Skittles: 2.5oz, Pretzels: 1.1oz). Participants are left alone to play the game.
- At the end of the 10 minutes, participants are asked to complete a demographics form which includes their age, gender, race/ethnicity, and basic questions about their gaming experience.
- The researcher gathers their height and weight to determine BMI.
- The snacks are then re-weighed to gauge the amount participants consumed during their time playing.

Early findings in the study show that on average, participants who play the food stimulus game are consuming more of the snacks than participants who play the non-food stimulus game. This difference occurs in all three snacks. Moving forward in the study, researchers will include demographic questions pertaining to the time of the last food consumption, so we can control for effects of hunger or fullness. Additional efforts will be made to evenly distribute genders between the groups. Participants in both groups are consuming more of the candies than pretzels. In the future, the snacks may be restricted to candy. We do not yet know if body weight is related to participant snacking.

