Author's response to reviews

Title: Using Direct Observations on Multiple Occasions to Measure Household Food Availability among Low-Income Mexicano Residents in Texas Colonias

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Response to Reviewers

We thank the reviewers for taking their time to review our manuscript and providing insightful comments and suggestions for improving our article. We will address the comments by reviewer.

Reviewer: Michelle Kegler

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Table 2 does not need to list the word “frequency” in the left column, since % (N) is clearly labeled.

   RESPONSE: Frequency is used to describe the frequency that specific food security items were experienced by the participants. The word “frequency” was removed from the table and placed in table footnote (highlighted to indicate the change).

2. The remaining tables (3-12) are difficult to understand at a glance. I suggest for the first such table (#3), the text be more detailed and refer to specific numbers in the table. Clearer labeling may also help: all 5 visits, 4 of 5 visits, 3 of 5 visits, etc. Additionally, the tables include both percentages and numbers, but the columns are not clearly labeled. The titles mention percentage, but the row header says number. Both should be clearly labeled in the tables.

   RESPONSE: We relabeled Table 3 for clarity (highlighted). The word “number” is used two ways; one for the number of participants and the other for the number of household inventories.

3. Although the tables are improved, I still think there is too much detail presented. The main point gets lost. The purpose of the paper is not to describe what food is available in these homes, but rather that it changes over time. That point could be made with 3-4 tables instead of 12. The same is true for the pictures – only one set is needed.

   RESPONSE: The number of tables was reduced to 9, which provide readers with important information. The number of pictures was reduced to two sets, which provide a picture of changes in the refrigerator and cabinets.
4. The tables also include a lot of rows with all zeroes. I suggest those be removed; the text could mention the items that were not available at any time in any of the homes (if that serves a purpose).

RESPONSE: Rows will all zeroes were removed as suggested; text mentions items not present.

5. Lastly, the authors should make the point that the appropriate time frame for household food inventories depends on their purpose. It may be that a single inventory is adequate for correlating with 24 hour dietary recalls, but not for correlating with percent calories from fat derived from a screening question that covers typical eating behavior. Some of these subtleties should be addressed.

RESPONSE: Two sentences added to the discussion as suggested (highlighted).
Reviewer: Katrina Giskes

No additional revisions required

I am satisfied with the Author’s responses to the points raised in my review.

Associate Editor Comments:

1. Although it is an article of interest, and the authors responded quite well to the questions of the reviewers, the results of this pilot project are presented in too much detail. There is a lot of overlap between what is presented in the results section and what is presented in the tables (there are for the moment 9 rather long tables on the availability of food groups in the 6 households). In my opinion for this pilot project the detail in the reporting is not necessary. I would suggest to report only in a table the results on the food groups – and not on individual food items ((fresh fruit, can fruit, frozen fruit, fresh vegetables, can vegetables, frozen vegetables, protein food, cereals, deserts, noodle and rice, beverages (eventually more detail here), and snacks)) and to give for these food groups the results of the tests for the agreement of presence of the food group during the 5 observations. In the results section more details can be discussed when needed, e.g. on the amount of food items available. The authors might suggest another way of presenting their data in a more concise way, but compression of the presented data is in my opinion possible and necessary.

RESPONSE: we reduced the number of tables and items within the tables.