Author's response to reviews

Title: Determinants of eating behaviour in university students: a qualitative study using focus group discussions

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Version: 3 Date: 3 January 2014

Author's response to reviews: see over
RESPONSES TO REVIEWERS’ COMMENTS

BMC Public Health
Ms. Ref. No.: 4442127210433949
Ms Title: Determinants of eating behaviour in university students: a qualitative study using focus group discussions

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<th>Reviewer comments</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
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<td>[with indication of the changes made in the manuscript; all references to pages and lines are related to the resubmitted revised manuscript (“track changes” version)]</td>
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REVIEWER 1: Karen Chapman-Novakofski

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<th>Discretionary Revisions</th>
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<td>1. Thank you for your responses and modifications to the manuscript. I feel both have adequately addressed my original concerns. Other suggestions are more minor, and I leave to the Editor to determine if these are needed (Discretionary Revisions).</td>
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<td>2. Please include a sentence or two describing the Belgium dormitory. Usually feel if I misunderstand something than several others might as well.</td>
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<td>3. Include the ecological model levels in your results and figure. I am used to seeing about 5, ranging from individual to interpersonal to organizational to community to policy. It feels like you use the first</td>
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Story et al. (2002) proposed this framework, based on the SCT and the ecological perspective, to understand the factors influencing eating behaviours (Story et al., 2002). “In this model, eating behaviour is viewed as being a function of multiple levels of influence. The framework also emphasizes the interaction and integration of factors within and across levels of influence” (Story et al., 2002).

To make this clearer, we added the following to the paragraph in the background section explaining behavioural models (p. 5, line 96): “Based upon the latter two theories Story et al. (2002) proposed a framework including individual (intrapersonal), social (interpersonal) environmental, physical environmental and macro levels, to understand factors influencing eating behaviours.”

Also, to be able to compare our results to those of other US studies, using focus group discussions to get insight into eating behaviour in university students (e.g. LaCaille et al. (2011) & Greaney et al. (2009) reporting both intra- and interpersonal (psychosocial) and environmental factors in their respective papers), we used the framework proposed by Story et al. (2002).

For the same reason, as well as to make sure all readers could understand the ecological principle, the authors dedicated an entire paragraph to explain how the ecological model has added the environmental factor to earlier psychological and psychosocial models, such as Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behaviour (1985) and Bandura’s SCT (1986).

However, taking the reviewer’s comments into account, the authors feel that some formulations in the manuscript may mislead the reader. We wanted to create an ecological based framework to give a clear overview of our results, rather than develop an actual ecological 'model' as such. Therefore, to avoid confusion or misunderstandings we reformulated the following in the results section (p. 9, line 204): “According to the ecological
An ecological framework of factors influencing eating (incl. drinking) behaviours in university students was developed based on content analysis of the focus group discussions (figure 1).”

Also, we reformulated the following in the discussion section (p. 19, line 458): “Similar to Story’s framework (2002), combining Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (1986) with Sallis’ ecological model (2002) explaining health behaviour, we identified four major levels of determinants: individual (intrapersonal), social environment (interpersonal), physical environment (community settings) and macro environment (societal).”

Concerning first steps toward tailoring programs, I’d suggest: Kelly et al. Systematic review of dietary interventions with college students: Directions for future research and practice J Nutr Educ Beh be consulted or cited. The authors thank the reviewer for this suggestion. We integrated this reference in the discussion section (p. 20, line 475): “Similar to US literature (Greaney et al., 2009, LaCaille et al., 2011, Nelson et al., 2009, Cluskey and Grobe, 2009), many self-regulatory processes, including intrinsic (e.g. food preferences) and extrinsic (e.g. health awareness, guilt) motivations, self-discipline, self-control, time management, etc. have been mentioned by our participants to be influencing eating behaviour in university students. Our results further indicate that these latter determinants become more important after the transition from secondary school to university when independency subsequently increases. In a qualitative study by Cluskey et al. (2009), university students who reported greater independency and more responsibility for food and meal preparation prior to college, felt to have achieved more stability in their eating behaviours at college. Therefore, LaCaille et al. (2011) suggested that future interventions should aim at strengthening students’ self-regulation skills around eating as part of the overall transition to university or college. Such self-regulation and self-management skills can help students to make more healthy decisions and to maintain a healthful lifestyle throughout adulthood (Nelson et al., 2009). Moreover, the systematic review of Kelly et al. (2013) evaluating the effectiveness of dietary interventions in college students suggested that approaches involving self-regulation strategies have the potential to facilitate changes in students’ dietary intake.”

I believe that gender and race have been reported to be significant The authors thank the reviewer for this suggestion. We included this
determinants of food choice in this population in the US. Although the authors nod to this, a reference or discussion in this area may be advised: Boek et al Gender and race are significant determinants of students’ food choices on a college campus. J Nutr Educ Behav 44:372-378, 2012. 

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<th>Reference on p. 24, line 584 (limitation section): Secondly, whereas we might expect differences in behaviours according to gender (Boek et al., 2012) or year in school, we chose to use mixed-gender focus groups including students of different study years and disciplines, allowing us to create interaction between both genders with a variety of study experience and backgrounds, which in turn generated a greater diversity in opinion within each focus group.</th>
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### References


