Author's response to reviews

Title: Reliability and validity of the short form household food security scale in a Caribbean community

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Reply to reviewers

We thank the reviewers for their comments on this version of the paper.

Mark Nord

1. The description of the differential item functioning model has been revised as suggested.

2. The item-score correlations have been described in the Methods section (page 6) 'Item-score correlations were estimated as the Pearson correlation between each item and the total, and were taken from the BILOG output[17].'

3. This point has been acknowledged in the Discussion (page 11): 'However, the requirement for additional explanation might support the idea that the original question is unsatisfactory. Qualitative research might be carried out to identify a more culturally appropriate wording for this item but changes to an established measure should generally be made cautiously because changes made locally may compromise the generalisability of findings.'

Stephen Blumberg

A new Table 7 has been added giving the data for each food item and each food security item separately. These data confirm the lack of association reported previously (ref 7).

The point made concerning the validity of the cutoffs has been inserted into the conclusion of the Abstract and into the Discussion (page 11): 'This differential functioning was not sufficiently large to influence the ranking of the item in the different groups. The 'eat less' and 'how often' items generally had similar thresholds while the 'hungry' item gave a much higher threshold. Therefore it is justifiable to conclude that the different relative item thresholds compared with US data, does not require alteration to the cut-points of two affirmatives for the classification of 'food insecurity without hunger' or five affirmatives for 'food insecurity with hunger'.'