Reviewer’s report

Title: College students’ interpretations of food security questions: Results from cognitive interviews

Version: 0 Date: 27 Jun 2019

Reviewer: Seth Berkowitz

Reviewer's report:

I think this is a well-written paper on an important topic--trying to explain the high (perhaps higher than expected) rates of food insecurity in college students. Strengths of paper include the high of very high quality and intensive data collection techniques (particularly the cognitive interviewing component) and high-quality qualitative data analysis methods.

The main limitations are the somewhat nominally small sample size (though saturation was obtained so the size was likely adequate), and the use of a single site for data collection. Given the intensive data collection undertaken here, both of those limitations were likely logistical and quite understandable. The authors are appropriately circumspect about these limitations, and I think on balance the novelty of this research substantially outweighs the limitations.

I have two small suggestions for the authors to consider.

The presentation of the results is quite comprehensive. While all of these findings are important to relay, the length of the results section makes it somewhat difficult to home in on key insights. I wonder if the authors could condense the results section to highlight key findings, and present additional findings in an appendix?

Secondly, given the authors immersion in this topic, I think the discussion section would be benefit from more of the authors insight regarding what might need to be changed in an adapted version of a food insecurity assessment tool for college students. The authors appropriately point out the benefits and drawbacks of making such an adjustment, but I think it would help crystalize some of the findings if the authors were more explicit (even if they want to acknowledge that they are speculating) as to what alternations would be needed for a college student specific module.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes
Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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I am able to assess the statistics

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