**Response to Peer-Review: Student Food Insecurity at the University of Manitoba**

**Canadian Food Studies**

**Reviewer #1**

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| 1) Page 1: Regarding the opening line, the reviewer recommended: “Consider opening with something more catchy. Maybe a quote or vignette from your study?” | **Revised:** A student’s quotation was added from the comment section of the survey to strengthen the beginning of the paper. |
| 2) Pg. 1: The reviewer recommended adding the total # of students who took the survey to the intro. (Written in text) “of X students”  | **Revised:** This number was added. |
| 3) Pg. 2: “Move this footnote into the main text.” | **No changes were made:** This footnote is no longer relevant due to changes made based on comments from peer-reviewer #2.  |
| 4) Pg. 4: “Mention the number of respondents in this section. Indicate the overall response rate? (N divided by 28,804)” | **Revised:** The response rate was added to the methodology section. In response to suggestions made by peer reviewer number 2, the relatively small sample size was added as a limitation of the study, and mentioned in several places. |
| 5) Pg. 5: Reviewer recommended: “Be more explicit about the statistical procedures.” | **Revised:** Clarity added regarding chi-square tests and univariate analysis was added:“Descriptive and univariate analysis were applied to the survey data. Chi-square tests of statistical significance were used order to assess which demographics were at greater risk of food insecurity, and univariate regressions were employed to assess the odds ratios for these demographic populations experiencing food insecurity.” |
| 6) Pg 5: “Disaggregate these categories. It is important to differentiate fair from poor. (Mental and physical health outcomes)” | **Revised:** An additional sentence was added which disaggregated these categories: “Within this category, 19.9% reported having fair physical health, and 4.4% assessed their physical health as poor. 23.5% of students assessed their mental health as fair while 12.3% assessed their mental health as poor.”  |
| 7) Pg. 6: The reviewer commended: “Disaggregate these categories. It is important to differentiate living alone from living with a roommate, and from living with a spouse. Each has important implications for vulnerability to food insecurity.Did you have a separate category for ‘living with parents’?” | **No changes were made:** The reason this sentence reports aggregated data was highlight the number of students living at home versus independently. In the findings table and in other sections of the paper the reader can observe the disaggregated data showing rates of food insecurity among these populations. |
| 8) Pg. 7: The reviewer asked for analysis of why older students were more food insecure within the findings section: “Why? Any thoughts?” | **Omitted:**While this section was originally edited as a response to peer reviewer #1’s comment, this section was omitted from the paper following new data analysis undertaken as a result of peer reviewer #2’s suggestions. |
| 9) Pg. 7: The reviewer recommends disaggregating payment on rent from payment on mortgages  | **No changes were made:** This was not a collapsed category, the question in the original survey enquired whether or not students payed either “rental fees or mortgage payments” on their residence. |
| 10) Pg. 9: The reviewer asked that we “Provide a title for Fig 1 & 2 & 3. Consider switching ‘frequency’ to ‘%’ in this graph and the next.” | **Revised:** Figure 1, 2 and 3 were revised to be in %’s and titles added above the figures.  |
| 11) Pg. 7: The reviewer recommended disaggregating students living in residence from students living with their parents: “Disaggregate. These categories are important for understanding food insecurity vulnerability.” | **Revised:** Thank you for pointing this out. These categories were re-assessed and disaggregated. When the statistical analysis was re-done following suggestions made by peer reviewer #2 these categories were analyzed separately. |
| 12) Pg. 11: Reviewer had a question regarding what the comparison was in the statement “Several factors could explain why the rate of food insecurity among students at the University of Manitoba might be comparatively lower than other provinces such as Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia.” The reviewer asked: “Lower than what?” | **Revised:** The passage was changed to add more information about what the specific rates we were comparing UofM statistics to: “Several factors could explain the comparatively lower rates of food insecurity at the University of Manitoba, including the relatively low costs of housing and tuition, as well as the province’s student demographics.”  |
| 13) Pg. 12: Does this mean full tuition for one year, or for just one of several courses? | **Revised:**The passage was revised to show that the figure referred to one full-year course and not a full-year of total course load. |
| 14) Pg. 10: Clarity regarding student quote “something has to take a back seat and for me that is school so I have enough money to live comfortably.” | **Revised:** To make the point of this quote more clear, more explanation was added in the sentence before the quote: “One student remarked on the necessity of working in addition to school, and the effects that additional work has on their studies, stating…” |
| 15) Pg. 11: The reviewer asked for clarity on whether the amount paid by international students was for one course or one semester: “Does this mean full tuition for one year, or for just one of several courses?” | **Revised:** “a science course” was switched to “one full-year science course” and the passage became more clear  |
| 16) Pg. 11: “Not sure what this means”: The reviewer asked for clarity on why living with a partner and those living alone were discussed together in a sentence and not collapsed  | **Revised:** The sentence was changed to add statistics about both categories individually. |
| 17) Pg. 13: “Avoid jargon” | **Revised:**Wording was changed to omit the use of the term “false positives.” The sentence was changed to say “Lastly, alternative factors may have affected the accuracy of the survey results.” |

**Reviewer #2:**

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| 1) “The manuscript opens with a definition of food security, but the second sentence uses “food insecurity” without defining it.” | **Revised:**An additional definition, specifically for food insecurity was added, citing two relevant sources “Alternatively, food insecurity is experienced when people are physically or economically unable to the access the variety or sufficient quantities of food that they need (Davis & Tarasuk, 1994; Tarasuk and Dachner, 2014)” |
| 2) “In the opening sentence of the context, the authors state that rates of food insecurity are rising, yet the 2015 Statistics Canada reference they use states clearly in the opening sentence of the highlights that “food insecurity rates have remained relatively stable over time.” | **Revised:** Instead of citing multiple sources, the rates of food insecurity reported were changed to include only findings from the Canadian Community Health survey, as analyzed by Tarasuk & Dachner in PROOF reports.  |
| 3) “The authors appear to be using a rate of food insecurity, 12%, from the PROOF Centre at U of Toronto without acknowledging the source or recognizing that PROOF uses a different, more inclusive, calculation of food insecurity than Statistics Canada or Health Canada and so its rates of food insecurity cannot be compared to Stats Can or Health Canada rates.” | **Revised:** Thank you for pointing out this oversight on our part. We had referenced a recent PROOF document but hadn’t cited it accordingly. We omitted the Statistics Canada statistic so that only PROOF recorded rates of national food security (based on the Canadian Community Health Survey) are discussed in the *Context* section: National rates of food insecurity in Canada are rising. As of 2014, 12% of Canadians are affected, an increase from 7.7% in 2007/08 (Tarasuk & Dachner, 2014). |
| 4) “It appears, though it is not clear, that the authors asked questions from the Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM), but did not use these questions to calculate the rate of food insecurity, which is the standardized way in which rates of food insecurity are calculated and classified as marginal, moderate or severe. It makes no sense to ask participants directly if they are food secure or insecure, and to assess their own perception of the severity, especially when there is a standardized way to do this using the HFSSM (though its applicability to students is unknown).I urge the authors to examine the PROOF reports for how to use the HFSSM to calculate a rate of food insecurity.” | **Revised:**As a response to this concern, the survey’s methodology has been changed. This is the most substantial change that was made to the survey based on the peer review response. In this new draft, we use a six-question rubric, based on the survey provided to us by researchers from Meal Exchange and administered at five other Canadian universities. In this new methodology, we assess moderate, severe, and overall food insecurity based on the methodology employed at these other institutions. While some questions are similar to those used in the HFSSM of the CCHS, the methodology we used is different, and therefore reported as such. We have also added a note in our *Limitations of study* section urging readers to use caution when making comparisons between our results and rates of food insecurity reported by the CCHS, which uses a different methodology. By changing the methodology to more closely resemble studies of food insecurity undertaken at these other universities, we are able to better compare rates of food insecurity to these other institutions. Additionally, we are able to compare actual rates of food insecurity to the self-reported rates of food insecurity among our student respondent population, which we were using for statistical purposes in the first draft of this paper. We believe by changing the methodology, the paper is in fact stronger, reporting on food insecurity rates more accurately, in a way that is more comparable to rates recorded at several other Canadian universities.  |
| 5) “The authors do not report a response rate, but given the figures they cite, it looks like the response rate to their survey was less than 2%. Is this a representative sample? What measures were taken to ensure a representative sample and adequate statistical power?” | **Revised:** Due to the relatively small sample size used for the purposes of this study, language used in describing the student population has been changed in several places to refer to “survey respondents” rather than “students at the University of Manitoba.”A response rate to the survey has been added to the methodology section, and the small sample size is referenced in the limitations of the study. In the study’s conclusion, the study is described as “exploratory,” providing a basis for further assessments of student health, including measures of food insecurity.  |
| “In the demographic factors, the authors state that “Indigenous Canadians have a rate of food insecurity as high as 54.2%, which corresponds with the 52.5% of food insecure Indigenous students in our survey.” However, there are many rates of food insecurity for Indigenous people in Canada, depending on where and how it was measured, and which population is examined. There are reported rates that are much higher than this. Importantly, food insecurity was not measured in the same way on these two surveys, so they can’t be compared.” | **Revised:** Thank you for pointing out this error on our part, the section has been changed to only use the CCHS statistic on Indigenous food insecurity. The passage now identifies that many measures exist, all assessing various populations of Indigenous communities in Canada: “Indigenous Canadians are also over-represented, with with rates of food insecurity among non-reserve Aboriginal populations of 25.7% in 2014 (Tarasuk et al., 2014,). This statistic is significantly lower than rates of food insecurity on First Nations Reserves, and within Northern Indigenous communities, monitored through various other measures of Indigenous food insecurity in Canada (Huet, Rosol and Egeland, 2012; FNIGC, 2012; Egeland, Pacey, Cao, Sobol, 2010).”  |