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## "Four Years of Ramen and Poverty": Using Photovoice to Engage the Voices of Food Insecure Students

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## "Four Years of Ramen and Poverty": Using Photovoice to Engage the Voices of Food Insecure Students

Miranda B. Klugesherz

Defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods,” food insecurity is a symptom of systematic disempowerment and represents one of the most prevalent social ailments to impact first-world countries. In a country where one in eight individuals does not have regular access to meals, food insecurity is far from a problem typically associated with college students. However, Feeding America, the largest emergency food assistance network in the nation, reports that one out of every ten people they serve is a student. In total, half of all students will find themselves unable to afford to eat at least once within their academic career; consequently, 1 in 4 will drop out.

The voices and narratives of food insecure students have been largely absent from the very research meant to represent them. In an effort to fill the gap in the knowledge regarding student hunger and food insecurity, Photovoice, a participant-led methodology which invites members of marginalized groups to photograph places, things, and events representative of, or crucial to, their daily life, was used to engage the partnership of seven food-insecure college students.

This research found that students who experience food insecurity engage in self-blaming practices and, thus, do not believe they have the right to be hungry or ask for help. Instead, food-insecure students employ several strategies, including face negotiation and disclosure, to minimize the severity of their situation and mitigate tensions between their health, finances, and convenience. Theoretical, practical and institutional implications were also discussed.





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