

## ABSTRACT

**DISSERTATION:** A Phenomenological Photovoice Study of the Lived Experiences of Community College Students who are Food Insecure

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**DATE:** December 2019

**PAGES:** 353

Food insecurity is a national crisis and affects about 40 million people in the United States. College food insecurity has captured the attention of media and policy makers. Community college students experience food insecurity at higher rates compared to university students or to the general population. The purpose of this study was to learn about the daily, lived experiences of community college students with food insecurity. While there is extant literature examining the prevalence of food insecurity in university and college populations, there is scant literature focusing on experiences of community college students who are food insecure. To address this gap in qualitative literature, nine students from Ivy Tech Community College participated in a phenomenological photovoice project, a type of participatory action research. The research question was: *How do community college students experience food insecurity?* Students took photos in response to prompts and engaged in an interview to discuss their photos. Selected photos are included in the findings. Using the interpretative phenomenological analysis approach, findings were developed from four primary themes: (a) being food insecure in community college, (b) asking for and receiving help, (c) surviving food insecurity and making choices, and (d) living with health issues related to food insecurity. This approach to analysis and the photovoice methodology provided an opportunity for a

marginalized population to share their experiences with policy makers and the community.

Although findings corroborated finds in existing quantitative literature, few qualitative studies on community college food insecurity have been conducted. Furthermore, I am not aware of existing studies of community college students who are food insecure using a photovoice methodology. Detailed explanation of all findings and implications for practice for institutions, states and the federal government are included. Community college leaders and food insecurity advocates may find the recommendations useful.

*Keywords:* community college students, food insecurity, photovoice, participatory action research, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, phenomenology