

# Bisexuals are not a punchline: Readers explain

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*Experts come out in support of a new report claiming college students are "food insecure," and explain why there's no need to take a jab at bisexuals.*



(Photo: Michael A. Schwarz, USA TODAY)

*Letter to the editor:*

In his column "[Starvation issues in universities? The real college problem is obesity](https://preview.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2018/04/11/obesity-not-starvation-real-problem-universities-column/500855002/) (<https://preview.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2018/04/11/obesity-not-starvation-real-problem-universities-column/500855002/>)," James Bovard used this serious issue to unconscionably and irresponsibly demean lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people — and especially bisexual students. Bovard's misguided views, served up with a troubling flippancy, only serve to harm an already vulnerable community.

What Bovard doesn't understand is that poverty, and its attendant food insecurity, affects members of the bisexual community at higher rates than their gay, lesbian and straight peers, according to UCLA's Williams Institute. People who identify as bisexual also face higher rates of mood disorders, substance abuse, eating disorders, cancer and other health disparities.

The explanation for these inequalities? The discrimination and stigmatization that the bisexual community faces every day. Bovard's cheap swipe at our community doubles down on harmful stereotypes and disparages an already at-risk population.

With views like Bovard's still so casually expressed — and printed in a major national publication — it's no wonder that bisexual people are less likely to live openly. And that makes it more difficult to address the very real and sometimes life-threatening barriers faced by bisexuals. We are not a punchline, Mr. Bovard.

**Allison Turner and Madeleine Roberts, Human Rights Campaign's Bisexual Employee Resource Group;** Washington, D.C.

**Related:** [Starvation issues in universities? The real college problem is obesity. \(/story/opinion/2018/04/11/obesity-not-starvation-real-problem-universities-column/500855002/\)](https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2018/04/11/obesity-not-starvation-real-problem-universities-column/500855002/)

*Letter to the editor:*

James Bovard exhibits little knowledge of higher education and college students, ignorance about the relationship between food insecurity and obesity, bigotry based on gender identity and sexual orientation, and limited understanding of research methods.

Contrary to his assertions, students today work hard. [One in four students has a child](https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/XUKVC0RoWVSnpYzZFBcER1?domain=iwpr.org) (<https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/XUKVC0RoWVSnpYzZFBcER1?domain=iwpr.org>), 70% are employed and all face higher-than-ever tuition prices. Far from a "largesse," the Pell grant covers just 1/3 of the cost of attending a public university. Bovard's claim that food insecure people are lazy is undermined by the fact that food insecurity and work hours are positively correlated.

Many studies affirm the HOPE Lab's findings ([http://protect-us.mimecast.com/redirect/eNpVUMtqwzAQ\\_JWis2VLtpLYPiWUQA7pg4ZQKAYj2qiVLaEHi2h9N-7cUNpb8vOzO7MfClnbEA1Ojn1Lh1fRs-D6fk5FWZACdJGoJomyAEnt5D0qochLxcVKxhLUBjCvekIHCCkAL6yMOakSstZmtN5SheXrZ1UQI9OA34MwdZN1mQf6mis1Ly7fGsyGzutBA\\_KjL7JnpUXM9T2r\\_BHXpKsX9r9jhYznLP2dr9bUUUpWRZsTWWhJGZy1pow\\_SDxMMjoHDyolsqhzUnZ-iWg6R0a8SAAEKeOTET9K\\_kB97B6sQD3NWMrIMcrBaprKPADp5gCgAW2eCFAFHnw5qkIL7cO3Xx-4EhCdZ32zV-ObRV0mdiSM0hg5OJ2\\_iv6uvb2f4hcE](http://protect-us.mimecast.com/redirect/eNpVUMtqwzAQ_JWis2VLtpLYPiWUQA7pg4ZQKAYj2qiVLaEHi2h9N-7cUNpb8vOzO7MfClnbEA1Ojn1Lh1fRs-D6fk5FWZACdJGoJomyAEnt5D0qochLxcVKxhLUBjCvekIHCCkAL6yMOakSstZmtN5SheXrZ1UQI9OA34MwdZN1mQf6mis1Ly7fGsyGzutBA_KjL7JnpUXM9T2r_BHXpKsX9r9jhYznLP2dr9bUUUpWRZsTWWhJGZy1pow_SDxMMjoHDyolsqhzUnZ-iWg6R0a8SAAEKeOTET9K_kB97B6sQD3NWMrIMcrBaprKPADp5gCgAW2eCFAFHnw5qkIL7cO3Xx-4EhCdZ32zV-ObRV0mdiSM0hg5OJ2_iv6uvb2f4hcE)). Studies at California State University and University of California found that 42-44% of students experienced food insecurity. At CUNY, the nation's largest urban public university, studies show that about 60,000 students are food insecure. Hunger is the colloquial term for food insecurity used by regular Americans. The HOPE Lab didn't "redefine" hunger but employed the USDA's standardized, validated module. Moreover, weight gain doesn't contradict evidence of food insecurity, as the two are positively correlated in the United States.

Finally, the greater risk of food insecurity faced by non-binary and LGBTQ students has nothing to do with "cavorting." The financial aid system disadvantages students (<https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/IDLOCpYoJQhg7wKZT1UvCO?domain=usnews.com>) estranged from their families, and students cut off from loved ones because of gender identity or sexual orientation often incur painful financial consequences. Making fun of those students is simply cruel.

**Nick Freudenberg of City University of New York School of Public Health, Sara Goldrick-Rab of Temple University, Suzanna Martinez of University of California Nutrition Policy Institute, and Aydin Nazmi of California Polytechnic State University**

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