

## **Student views of insect consumption: A Q methodology study**

Melissa Reed<sup>1</sup>, W. Wyatt Hoback<sup>1</sup>, and Angel Riggs<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology, <sup>2</sup>Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK

**Introduction:** Global food demand is rapidly increasing. The addition of insects to human diets has been recommended to reduce pressure on global food production. Insects are a sustainable source of animal protein with high nutritional value and relatively low production costs. Despite economic and ecological benefits, many westerners are unwilling eat insects. Although the psychological and cultural attitudes towards eating insects have been explored, little research has examined the attitudes of US college students towards consuming insects.

**Purpose:** This research explores perspectives regarding insect consumption among students at Oklahoma State University using Q methodology to identify and characterize distinct groups of students based on similarities and differences in the individual viewpoints they hold.

**Methods:** Twenty-nine students, across 12 majors, ranked a Q set of 41 statements representing a variety of opinions and beliefs about insect consumption. Factor scores and post-sort interviews were used to interpret the results.

**Results:** Data analysis and interpretation identified two perspectives of students toward insect consumption: (1) Insect consumption is good for me and good for the planet and (2) Insect consumption is repulsive. The insect consumption is good for me and good for the planet sorter desires environmentally friendly practices and believes that they should eat insects to benefit the greater good. The insect consumption is repulsive sorter is strongly opposed to consuming insects.

**Significance:** This study provides a deeper understanding of college student perceptions of insect consumption. These findings help to identify factors to consider when introducing insect consumption to university students in western cultures.

**Keywords:** Entomophagy, insect consumption, student perspectives, food source, environmental sustainability