

ANTHRO-SPECTIVE

THE BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF ANTHROPOLOGY MAJORS



PHOTOS BY TAM DO

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BY MAREL SMJETANA

The fall semester has finally come to a close. As everyone enjoys some much-needed time off, we wanted to look back at everything that happened this semester. Lucky's Little Library was launched, the faculty won kickball (again), and all of our students worked hard. I think the best part of this semester was seeing Lefty's Lounge come back to life- I began my studies during the pandemic, so I had never gotten to see the lounge so full of people before now. I truly adore getting to talk to other students while we work or eat lunch in the lounge, and it's really made me feel closer to the Anthropology community as a whole. If you haven't stopped by yet, please come visit the lounge next semester! We hope to see you there. In the meantime, enjoy this break. I personally plan to spend the next few weeks cuddled up in a blanket by the fire, drinking some hot chocolate and finally doing some reading that wasn't assigned as classwork.

CONGRATULATIONS WINTER 2021 GRADS!



Isabell
Aguirre



Thien-Chau
Bui

Karina
Garcia

Rinda
Gray

Brianna
Smith

Alessandra
Valenzuela

Melissa
Vance

SEMESTER IN REVIEW



Thanks for a lovely semester!

Are you an Anthropology Major with a story or idea?

Would you like to be a guest columnist?

Would you like your artwork to be featured in the newsletter?

Email ANTH-Ambassador@unt.edu with suggestions and contributions for future content!

The Intersectionality of Food Insecurities Among Young People and Medical Care and the Impacts They Have

By: Thien-Chau Bui



What was something you ate as a kid because there wasn't enough food in the house?" Some answers could include "cereal", "bread", "ramen noodles", "pop tarts", or in my personal case, it was scrambled eggs and soy sauce. However, for TikTok user @aimlesszealot, it was medication. Yes, you read that correctly: it was medication. Allow me to provide some context; @aimlesszealot became an orphan at fifteen when his mother deserted him, and by seventeen, he was emancipated and living in an aided residential program. This user shared that he was undergoing rigorous mental health issues due to attempts and struggles of balancing being a full-time student and working a full-time job to provide for himself. Due to the decline of his already poor mental health, @aimlesszealot had a social worker who arranged a meeting with a psychiatrist to get him the appropriate mental care that he needed. Even with the assistance of state welfare and food pantries, this TikTok user was still struggling to pay bills and eat regularly.

About six months prior, @aimlesszealot's psychiatrist put him on a new medication, Neurontin, that seemed to help take some edge off his depression. One would think this was a good thing; however, he shares that the drug, although it was effective, had many other side effects—side effects that he could not afford. If you haven't already guessed what this specific side effect is, it was increasing appetite. As previously shared, @aimlesszealot was struggling to balance money for bills and other necessities as well as putting food in his stomach. With this new medication and how it was increasing his appetite, @aimlesszealot realized that something had to change, so he did his research and presented his findings to his psychiatrist and asked to be taken off Neurontin and switched to Wellbutrin. He shared that his psychiatrist was confused at the sudden desire to change medications and asked if the Neurontin had stopped working. @aimlesszealot continues explaining that while Neurontin worked fine, it made him gain weight—something he didn't mind; however, the drug was increasing his appetite, and he simply could not afford the food to fulfill it.

In contrast, one of the side effects of Wellbutrin is that it suppresses appetite, something that @aimlesszealot could work with as he cannot "find or afford more food." He argues that Wellbutrin could make him eat less, meaning he could better stretch out food throughout the week. He backs up this argument by showing his psychiatrist a calendar, suggesting that he could alternate medication depending on his financial situation to maintain a healthy weight while avoiding hitting withdrawals and keeping him medicated. @aimlesszealot made a closing argument that while the state wouldn't provide him with more food stamps, they did cover the cost of his medication. This statement referenced his initial response on having "eaten medication" as a child due to insufficient food at home.

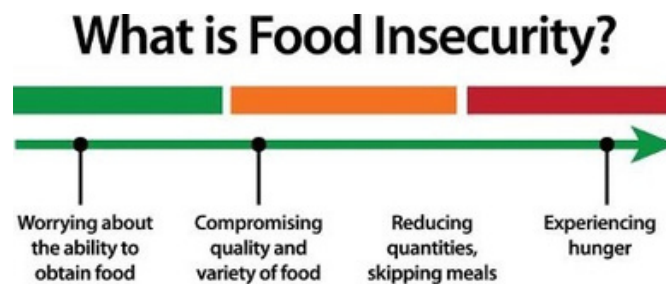


Photo Credit: LEADMN | College Students Connecting for Change

As an activist and a future anthropologist, I was fully aware of food insecurities in youth and students, as well as issues with mental health. However, I did not think that the two topics would—or could—ever intersect; now that light has been dawned on the situation, I can't help but think of how many others are currently going through what @aimlesszealot went through. During separate interviews with a handful of college students ages 20 through 22, I asked how the intersection of food insecurities and medical care has impacted their lives. These are a few of the answers that I received.

1. Have you ever faced a situation when food or regular eating was scarce?

Jadyn Trahan, 20 years old: "Yes, I was going through a difficult time. My stove was broken; I did have food, but I had to divide it up."

An anonymous student, 20 years old: "Although I had not experienced a time when food was scarce, there has been times where the quality of food has altered due to financial factors ... less healthy food tends to be a cheaper alternative than what I would have liked, and although homemade cooking makes a wonderful goal, it comes with expensive groceries and not enough time to actually cook."

Tessa Shanahan, 21 years old: "Sophomore year, I experienced food insecurity and wasn't eating as much because I didn't have money—and now. Although I don't experience food insecurity anymore, I'm still not eating regularly because I have no time, and sometimes, I get so busy that I forget to eat."

Chanel Wilson, 22 years old: "Unfortunately, yes. I come from a poor financial background, so sometimes, sacrifices had to be made so that we could afford bills. Additionally, in the fall of 2019, my father and I became homeless due to poor financial circumstances. I decided to move to Denton and used my FAFSA to pay for an apartment on campus. Rent was very high, and I was lacking financial aid, resulting in my 'survival' off my roommates' and friends' kindness of offering to buy me food."

2. How would you describe the state of your health (physical & mental) during this time?

Jadyn: "I was very anxious and upset. I was very tired."

Anonymous Student: "My mental health is one of the higher points in my life, and although my physical health could be better, I am in a position where it is more feasible to care for my physical health, work out, attend doctor's appointments, etc."

Tessa: "I was feeling stressed having to conquer school while having little to no money."

Chanel: "In the fall of 2019, I lost a noticeable amount of weight. I hadn't realized how little I was eating until people started pointing it out. I had little to no appetite due to having to make a single meal stretch for days. As for my mental health...it was horrible. I felt helpless and hopeless for the future, and comments about my weight didn't help. During this time, I was suffering from severe depression."

3. How has your experience with food insecurity impacted your physical & mental health?

Jadyn: "It made me more appreciative of what I do have and how easily that can be taken away. Dealing with a declining mental state on an empty stomach wasn't the best and I never want to go back to that."

Anonymous Student: "They definitely correlate. My social and financial responsibilities often determine the food I can afford and the ability to tend to my mental and physical health deficiencies. The better my financial situation, the less I have to focus on obtaining the bare necessities—housing, gas, food, water—because they are covered. I can, then, use whatever budget is left over on other expenses."

Tessa: "I put off eating—sometimes, I put it off so late that I forget to eat and end up skipping a meal. But little has to do with my mental state of mind."

Chanel: "My experience with food insecurity impacted my mental health more than anything. I carried the weight of financial problems and food insecurity in my childhood, so them happening again was a huge issue. I have paranoia of having no money and not being able to eat. At the same time, I experienced extreme guilt when spending money on food as I felt the money could have gone towards something more important. This has definitely messed with my relationship with food."

4. What are some things you have done to cope with this?

Jadyn: "I try to save money and order less takeout."

Anonymous Student: "Self-care helps to cope with the results of how financial situations affect food intake and my mental health. It may not necessarily be physical but more having a peace of mind."

Tessa: "I substitute out food with liquids or snacks throughout the day in case I skip lunch."

Chanel: "Honestly, I don't know if I've coped with it—or at least I don't consider the things I've been doing as 'coping'. I've saved a decent amount of money, keeping me at a good financial point so that groceries are considerable. I am hyper-aware of my bank account and my goals for it, so I will be cutting out the cost of ordering take-out."

College life is stressful as is, even before having to do it in the middle of a pandemic. And whether the effects of mental health come from stress and feelings of being overwhelmed, being homesick, dealing with depression and anxiety, or other mental health issues, it is needless to say that most college-age people fight different battles in the same war. Coping with and taking care of their mental health is enough of a struggle, but adding on the extra baggage of coming home to little to no food can't be easy. A few other college-age people who wished to remain anonymous shared similar experiences to those above. One student in particular shared that she has a history of having seizures, but because brain scans show no signs or symptoms of epilepsy, she could not get the medication she needed to help with her episodes. However, she discovered that smoking cannabis or ingesting THC edibles had helped tremendously. Since increasing her cannabis use, this student has not had seizures in nearly two years. The downfall came when this student faced food insecurity and had to decrease her cannabis intake as one of the side effects was the increase in appetite. Although cutting off smoking has helped the student "eat less," her seizures also returned. This was the price that student had to pay.

After learning that these food insecurities and medical care can intersect—and often do—it makes me question how many others, like TikTok user @aimlesszealot, have substituted their meals with appetite suppressant medication or other means of subduing hunger. What @aimlesszealot said about the state covering his medical expenses but not providing him food stamps shows which struggling factors of life the government prioritizes and which is deemed the lesser important. This statement is backed up by Action Against Hunger, who reported that around the world, although there is more than enough food produced to feed the global population, as many as 811 million people still go to sleep hungry. This number had since increased by 161 million in 2020, making it a total of almost one billion people hungry and malnourished, primarily due to social, political, and other conflicts, climate change, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This Christmas, let us all keep in mind those who will be spending the holidays hungry or those who must put food before gifts and presents. While we are sitting at the table with our loved ones with a lavishing dinner as our centerpiece, let us consider our brothers and sisters who cannot experience the same blessings. Spread not only love and cheers this holiday, but let's also spread awareness of the stories shared. Let us spread knowledge about the food pantry for students put together by the Department of Anthropology and perhaps lend a helping hand and volunteer at a local soup kitchen or shelter for the houseless. We are not lacking food, so why are our people going hungry?



Co-arranged By:
Mia Rogers

REMINDER: TURN IN PASSPORTS

Passports can be turned in online by emailing them to ANTH-Ambassador@unt.edu. If you didn't get your passport stamped for an online event, please email us and we can see what we can do.



Passports are due by January 24th. The pizza party reward for completed passports will be held at the beginning of the spring semester.



If you were unable to complete a passport this semester, that is okay! You will have the opportunity to turn in completed passports at the end of next semester as well.





***Happy Holidays!
Enjoy the break,
rest well, and we
will see you next
semester!***

- Marel and Tam

