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“money For Food”: A Deeper Look At Food Insecurity And Class Privilege In Higher Education

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Abstract

Assumptions around the class privilege of college students are misconstrued. Food insecurity rates among college students (between 20-50%) far outweigh the rate of food insecurity nationally (12%) (Dubick et al., 2016). With the rising cost of tuition, insufficient financial aid, and the growth of first-generation and lower income students entering higher education, an increasing number of college students are struggling to balance paying for tuition and basic needs such as food. This paper looks at how factors such as race, undergraduate year, first-generation status, and employment status impact a student's likelihood of being food insecure. While most studies focus on financial barriers to food access, this study recognizes barriers of access such as time and transportation, breaking down the social and classed assumptions of students in higher education. Utilizing a mixed methods approach, including survey and qualitative interview data over the course of two years at Gonzaga University, a private liberal arts college in the US Pacific Northwest, my research reveals that not only were 36% of the surveyed population food insecure, but also that the most defining, frequent, and statistically significant predictor of food insecurity was being a working student. This was followed by race, first-generation status, and undergraduate year. This research dispels assumptions associated with college students and privilege. I argue that paying attention to student food insecurity in higher education can uncover hidden class-based inequalities of campus spaces.

“Money for Food”:
A Deeper Look at Food Insecurity and Class Privilege in Higher Education

By

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Preface

"What we research is our relation with the researched." (England, 1994; Rose, 1997, p. 315)

As I write this thesis, I sit with the fact that, I too, am *still* a food insecure college student. This work and the feelings I encountered profoundly impacted me because in many ways I *understand* hunger. Much like the participants of this research, as an undergraduate student at Gonzaga University, I experienced food insecurity. At the time, I could not name what I was experiencing, frequently blaming myself for my inability to afford food, not realizing that the skyrocketing prices of higher education, the lack of adequate financial aid, and the financial vulnerabilities stemming from my socioeconomic background were hindering my chances at meeting my basic needs and attaining academic success. I endured three years of varying degrees of food insecurity, and it was not until my third and final year that I realized what I had experienced. My hunger was (and continues to be) a symptom of an unmet basic need.

My shared experience equipped me with the sensitivity to provide a space to ask difficult questions and develop researcher-participant rapport. Amidst shared feelings of frustration and disappointment, we reflected on the ways we creatively and strategically fed ourselves and created communities of care with our peers to counteract the pitfalls of institutional support. It was this solidarity we encountered that propelled us towards deeper and rich conversation.

Even so, I am not devoid of privilege. As a researcher it is important for me to recognize that conducting research on a subject group is already an extractive practice, where I, as the researcher can depart a situation and retreat to the safety of my academic institution while the researched cannot leave their situation (Stacey, 1991). At the same time, while it is important to practice reflexivity and recognize the power relations between the researcher and the researched,

it is a difficult task to undertake. Reflexivity can make us more aware of asymmetrical or exploitative relationships, but it cannot remove them (England, 1994, p. 86).

Even with my similar lived experiences and identities, there is still a power difference that I must address and navigate in a way that does not exploit the stories of the research participants. On top of that, I had to conduct myself in a way that did not encourage the assumption that because I have similar lived experiences, I should already know or think the same way (Mistry et al., 2015). Researchers who are like the researched are not completely the same, these researchers are "boundary straddlers," operating in spaces of in betweenness (Butz, 2010). These situations often require strategies to defamiliarize participants, so they give detailed responses, instead of silence produced by assumed shared beliefs and experiences (Parikh, 2020).

In preparation for conducting interviews with students, I frequently asked myself, what am I missing? Am I making too many assumptions based off my lived experience that may limit or place the research participants in a box? I did not want to speak for them, so I chose to speak *with* them (Alcoff, 1991; Pellander & Horsti, 2018), encouraging them to question me and my motivations to demystify my role and level power dynamics, with the intention to treat our conversation as a collaboration.

This thesis aims to amplify marginalized and silenced voices, from those who participate and from thinkers that inform the work. I also want to treat this work as a component of a larger aim, one where *all* students can pursue higher education free from hunger in the long run, and not as an end or singular project. Ideally, this work will integrate all those involved in a way that is inclusive and empowering, with the consideration of how difficult it will be.

Introduction

"Go to college" is the mantra of many high school students, the constant reminder by the authority figures in their lives, and the so-called ticket to a successful career with little financial worry. Achieving this goal requires students to commit to a fixed daily schedule of eat breakfast, attend school, eat lunch, participate in extracurricular activities, eat dinner, do homework, and somewhere in the daily mix, engage in some sort of community service, all in an effort to stand out to an admissions committee. While not every student is bound to these activities for the sake of attending college, as cost of living and the demand for advanced credentials increases, attending college is becoming less of a choice and more of a base requirement to increase students' ability to attain a stable occupation after completing high school (Dubick et al., 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018).

As more students are attending college to improve their chances on the job market, the face of the "traditional" college student is shifting. Less students are immediately enrolling into college full-time after high school, depending on their parents for financial support, or working part-time or not at all during the school year, while more students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, part-time and full-time working students, and first-generation students are attending college (Freudenberg et al., 2019). [1] These shifting characteristics bring with them a host of vulnerabilities that exacerbate the uncertainties of first-time adult responsibilities like paying rent and buying groceries. It is overwhelming to create a schedule where students must ensure that they are not only meeting their academic responsibilities, but also at the very basic level, ensuring they are meeting the needs necessary to their survival. There are plenty of tips

[1] By "working students," I mean those who in addition to completing academic requirements, are also working for a wage to meet their basic needs.

and tricks to get the best grades, score the most impressive internships, and build long-lasting connections, yet there is a lack of broadcasted resources that encourage and support healthy and balanced habits that cover the most rudimentary of needs like eating.

As emerging adults, between the ages of 18-25 years old, navigating relative independence and exploring the possibilities that lead to eventual adulthood, college students are not always fully equipped to handle balancing their competing responsibilities, often giving precedence to their academics and social life, making living expenses a lesser priority, with secure housing coming before food (Arnett, 2000). Given the rising cost of tuition and insufficient financial aid to offset the cost, many students are forced to make sacrifices, whether it be time dedicated to their education to work for wages or a basic need (frequently a meal to two meals) to ensure tuition and housing are covered (Dubick et al., 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2019). Once the ability to purchase and acquire food is impacted, the more likely a student is to become food insecure.[2] If a student becomes regularly food insecure, quality, variety, or desirability of diet is reduced, with the elevated risk of experiencing hunger, brought on by disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake (*USDA ERS - Definitions of Food Security*, 2022).

The consequences of food insecurity are not solely reduced quality, variety, desirability of diet, disrupted eating patterns, and reduced food intake. Food insecurity can also have short and long term effects that harm a student's physical and mental wellbeing, their psychosocial development, and overall academic achievement, impacting their ability to successfully meet the demands and expectations of college life (Dubick et al., 2016; Meza et al., 2019; Payne-Sturges

[2] "Food insecurity" and "low or very low food security" are used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

et al., 2018). In adulthood, food insecurity can increase mental health problems and depression, diabetes, obesity, hypertension, poor sleep, and overall lower self-rated health (Payne-Sturges et al., 2018).

Taking these consequences into consideration, the most cited factors that impact the likelihood of financial need and food insecurity among college students are race, meal-plan status, housing problems, first-generation status, and employment status (Dubick et al., 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Patton-López et al., 2014; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018). These factors inform the following research questions: in the context of a private undergraduate institution, a space commonly understood as privileged and affluent, how do factors such as race, undergraduate year, first-generation status, and employment status, impact a student's likelihood of being food insecure? Furthermore, other than financial barriers recognized in the USDA Food Security Survey Module (FSSM), what barriers impact or deter college students from having access to purchase and acquire food? And lastly, how do current interventions meet the needs of college students?

Using a mixed methods approach, including quantitative surveys and qualitative in-depth interviews, I investigate food insecurity on a college campus as a way to uncover more structural inequalities. My key findings from this research show that class-based inequalities were the resounding cause of food insecurity for most students. Understanding these root causes can lay the foundation for critically informed food security interventions that expand food access and food assistance for college students to best support their college completion. Improving campus food security plays a role in addressing overall food security for the betterment of student health and wellbeing (Broton & Cady, 2020).

Gonzaga University

Research on campus food insecurity has largely excluded private institutions, because most college food security literature focuses on nontraditional students in the contexts of two-year community colleges and public four-year institutions (see Brito-Silva et al., 2022; Davitt et al., 2021; El Zein et al., 2022; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021; Meza et al., 2019; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018; Peterson & Freidus, 2020; Woerden et al., 2019). Looking closely at a private institution debunks the idea that only wealthy or affluent students attend private universities, revealing the unseen experiences and struggles of students of marginalized backgrounds in these particular spaces of class privilege.

This thesis emerged from an existing project that came to fruition during my time as the Campus Kitchens AmeriCorps volunteer at Gonzaga University (GU), a small private liberal arts institution in Spokane, Washington, working out of their Center for Community Engagement, a department in the division of Student Affairs.[3] On the off chance that I had free time from food preparation, food deliveries, and hosting community food gatherings concentrated in Northeast Spokane, I would participate in committee meetings dedicated to on-campus initiatives or interventions that focused on student food security. Two separate meetings, one with an undergraduate student in the Political Science department interested in implementing meal swipe sharing on campus and the other with Financial Aid counselors interested in establishing liaison with the local county Department of Social and Health Services to facilitate the application process for students interested in accessing food assistance, led to a five-month food security

[3] Permission was granted to use Gonzaga University's name for the purpose of this research through an Institutional Review Board (IRB) Authorization Agreement since this was outside research.

survey project, with survey development beginning in October 2019 and survey distribution running from January 2020 to March 2020 to find evidence to support these efforts.

At the time, the student body at Gonzaga University was comprised of 5,238 undergraduate students, 25% of which were students of color (Figure 1), 14% were first-generation college students (Figure 2), and 12% were Pell-Grant eligible (Figure 3) (Office of Institutional Research, 2023). Considering the costly price tag of tuition ($44,280) (Gonzaga Financial Aid Office, 2019) during the 2019-2020 academic year and the lack of tangible basic needs support other than emergency funds for students in dire need of financial support, it was only a matter of time that a call for interventions would surface.

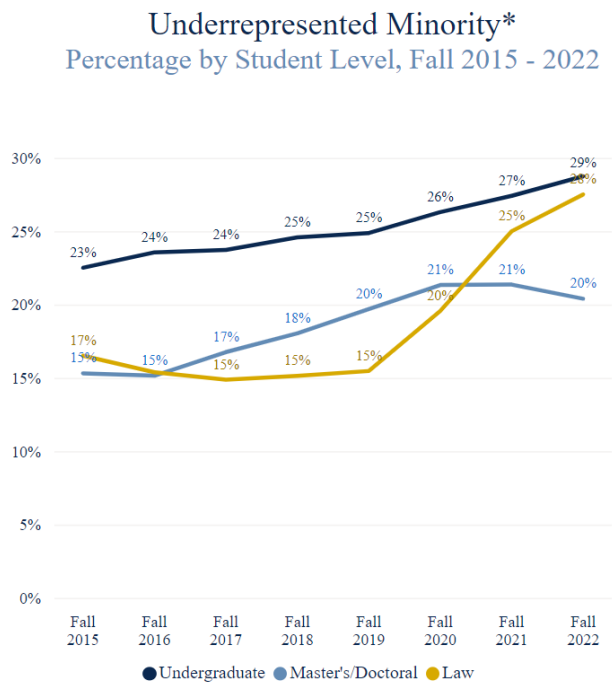

*Figure 1. Race and Ethnicity Characteristics of Enrolled Students at Gonzaga University from 2015-2022. *Underrepresented minority (URM) includes the following Race/Ethnicity descriptions: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanics of any race, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Two or more races (Office of Institutional Research, 2023).*

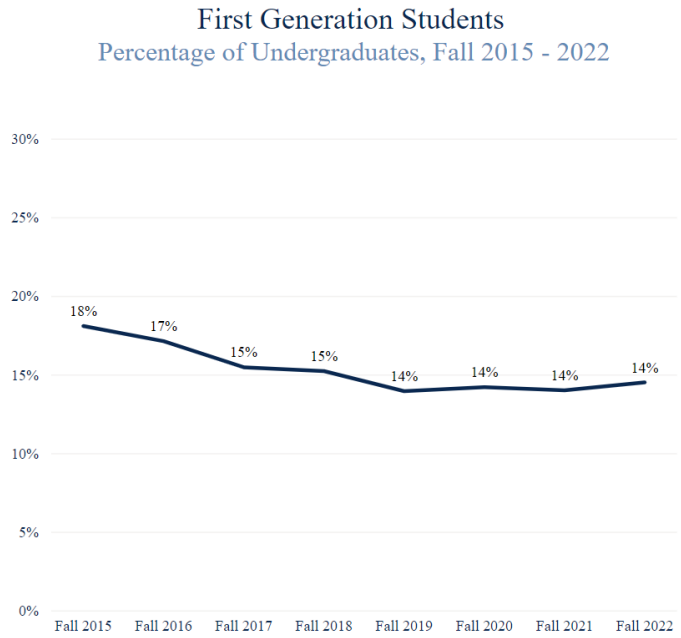

Figure 2. First Generation Status of Enrolled Students at Gonzaga University from 2015-2022.

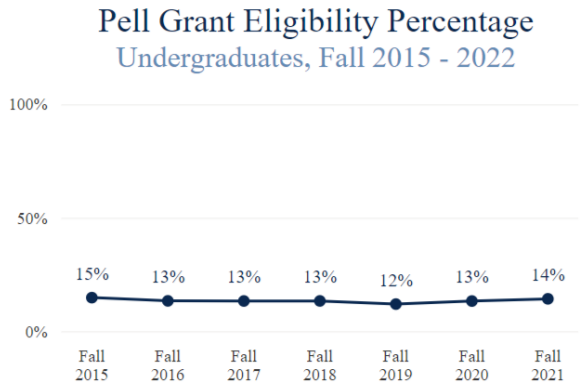

Figure 3. Pell Grant Eligibility of Enrolled Students at Gonzaga University from 2015-2022.

Three years into the COVID-19 pandemic, tuition has since jumped in price ($49,800) (Gonzaga Financial Aid Office, 2022) and in an effort to mitigate food insecurity, Gonzaga University has established a food pantry on campus through their Gonzaga Community Pantries pilot program (Apprill-Sokol, 2022). Moreover, the student body population demographics have also shifted to reveal as of the 2022-2023 academic year, 29% of students are students of color (a 4% increase) (Figure 1), 14% of students are first-generation college students (Figure 2), and

14% of students are Pell-Grant eligible (a 2% increase) out of the 5,093 students enrolled (Office of Institutional Research, 2023). While racial and class diversity have increased, there has been no change to students of first-generation backgrounds. These new figures and pilot intervention spurred my interest to expand the original intent of the research and ask new questions about food insecurity predictors, barriers to food access, and existing campus interventions through qualitative interviews to refine and supplement the survey data from 2020.

Overview

The following four chapters describe how food insecurity emerges on college campuses broadly and narrows in on its emergence at Gonzaga University, paying careful attention to student concerns and hopes around food security.

In Chapter 2, I situate food insecurity in the campus context, detailing emerging themes prevalent in college food security literature such as predictors of food insecurity, barriers that impact food access and procurement, current campus food security interventions, and gaps where more research is needed. In Chapter 3, I describe the mixed methods I employed throughout this research to reveal potential blind spots of a single method as well as the importance of nuancing numbers with stories to enrich data. In Chapter 4, I frame the research around higher education's reproduction of class and consequently class-based differences that influence financial precarities like food insecurity. The sections throughout this chapter attempt to engage with the questions that guide this research in a way that connects survey data, student voices, and literature.

I conclude with the overarching theme of change, calling for new food security measurement instruments, countering narratives regarding working students, and offering

potential interventions voiced by students for students that meet their needs more holistically, while acknowledging their situations of precarity.

Situating Food Insecurity on Campus

The study of food insecurity as a public health concern emerged most prominently in the early 1990s. It has been studied by critical scholars in sociology, geography, anthropology, and food studies, as well as clinicians and practitioners in nutrition, public health, and other behavioral sciences, to inform the allocation of public and private dollars towards federally funded food programs and public and private emergency food systems (Alaimo, 2005). College food insecurity is a relatively new and emerging scholarly topic uncovered from the inadequacies of financial aid (Dubick et al., 2016). This study builds on the existing literature of college food insecurity, with a focus on the factors that increase the likelihood of food insecurity, the barriers that impact access and procurement, and current campus food security interventions.

College students are more likely to be food insecure than the general public (approximately between 20-50% of students are food insecure compared to 12% of the general population) (Dubick et al., 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Meza et al., 2019; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018; Peterson & Freidus, 2020; Woerden et al., 2019). Growing rates of food insecurity have resulted from the rising cost of tuition (price for a four-year degree has doubled – 34% increase at public institutions and 26% increase at private institutions respectively after adjustment for inflation), insufficient financial aid (Pell Grant funding has not adjusted to the rising rate of recipients – going from covering four fifths of a four year college degree, now covering less than a third of the cost), more financial hardship for low- to moderate-income families, a weak labor market for part-time workers, a rising cost of living expenses (those living off-campus are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity), declining per capita college resources, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) policies that specifically exclude many college students from accessing food assistance (Dubick et al., 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2019;

Tatter, 2018).[4] The lack of adequate financial assistance to cover both college and living expenses, and restrictive eligibility requirements for students to access public benefits, have put students in a position of vulnerability, with the inability to access or procure food.

Despite college becoming more accessible to nontraditional students, they are the most impacted by food insecurity, particularly students of color from low-income backgrounds (especially African American and Latinx students at rates between 43-57%), first-generation students, and working students (Dubick et al., 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018). Broken down further, throughout the United States, students who work twenty or more hours a week (56%), receive financial aid (75%), live off campus (24%), and utilize a meal plan (43%) are more likely to report being food insecure (Dubick et al., 2016; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018). With the value of minimum wage declining and employers splitting full-time job hours to avoid paying for benefits, students have been forced to work multiple part-time jobs to make ends meet and choose between work and school, deciding between lost wages or lower grades (Freudenberg et al., 2019). For students not enrolled in their institution's unlimited meal plan and without access to cooking facilities to cook their own meals, they are more likely to experience disrupted eating patterns because all other meal plans are inadequate and insufficient in meeting the recommended food intake of three meals a day, putting them in a position of choosing which meals to give up (Woerden et al., 2019).[5,6] If students on a meal plan are also working, their time commitment to their job reduces the opportunity to go to the dining hall within the limited hours of operation (Woerden et al., 2019). Students without a meal plan and

[4] The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) issues electronic benefits that act like cash to purchase food. SNAP primarily helps low-income people and other high need populations.

[5] First-year students and sometimes second-year students are required to live on campus and purchase a meal plan.

[6] A typical meal plan offers 14 meals a week averaging to two meals a day.

living off campus (most often third-year and fourth-year students), have the added weight of purchasing their own groceries and paying their rent and related expenses, usually giving priority to housing security before food security (Payne-Sturges et al., 2018).

Barriers to Food Access

The USDA FSSM measures food insecurity on the basis of financial barriers, with many of the questions framed around not having enough money for food (USDA, 2012). Some researchers have determined that the FSSM as it currently stands, is insufficient in determining all barriers to food security (Peterson & Freidus, 2020). Food insecurity can be a result of a variety of barriers, such as constraints around time, transportation, housing, food management practices, and disability (Gaines et al., 2014; Peterson & Freidus, 2020). Furthermore, accessing food to improve food security is not only relegated to retail, it also includes emergency food systems like food pantries and basic needs assistance like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp program (Feeding America, 2023b). Much like food retail barriers, accessing food assistance can bring with it a host of other non-financial barriers like stigma, lack of knowledge, perceived insufficient need, limited hours of operation, and restrictive eligibility requirements (Brito-Silva et al., 2022; Dickinson, 2022; El Zein et al., 2022; Peterson & Freidus, 2020).[7] When the USDA FSSM assumes a financial cause for food insecurity, it undercounts individuals who are food insecure for other reasons. As such, the literature emphasizes the value in adapting the USDA FSSM to frame questions around other

[7] College students are not eligible for SNAP unless they are enrolled less than half-time in an institution of higher education or qualify for a student exemption, such as working at least 20 hours a week in paid employment or participate in a state or federally financed work study program (USDA, 2021).

barriers and utilize qualitative methods to determine individual circumstances that explain why individuals may be food insecure.

Interventions

To address college food insecurity, researchers have proposed interventions at the campus level and at the policy level. Interventions at the campus-level include campus food pantries, swipe-sharing programs, expanded meal plans and dining hall hours, and campus community gardens (Broton & Cady, 2020; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018; Tatter, 2018; Woerden et al., 2019). At the policy level, recommended interventions include increasing the Pell Grant maximum, expanding the school lunch federal program to college students, simplifying the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to ensure students are getting the financial assistance they deserve, and expanding SNAP eligibility requirements for students to access public benefits (Broton & Cady, 2020; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018; Tatter, 2018; Woerden et al., 2019).

Some institutions have begun to employ these interventions, but due to a lack of student awareness, frequent turnover, and non-standardized processes, they have fallen short on improving college food security. Combating student hunger can only succeed if there are known sustainable programs and policies that are consistent with meeting the needs of students. Broton & Cady (2020) have emphasized the importance and need for campus and community partnerships (including inter- and intra-departmental partnerships, as well as outside of campus partnerships with local social services bodies), full-time and permanent staff, volunteer management and relations, consistent program evaluations, standardized and repeatable processes, and looking to other models to constantly improve food security efforts (see also

Broton & Cady on the food security efforts of Single Stop and OSU's Human Services Resource Center (HRSC)) (Broton & Cady, 2020).

Gaps

Existing research largely employs quantitative methods to address the impacts of college food insecurity (Brito-Silva et al., 2022; Davitt et al., 2021; Dubick et al., 2016; Gaines et al., 2014; Patton-López et al., 2014; Woerden et al., 2019), with very few studies using qualitative methods (Broton & Cady, 2020; Dickinson, 2022; El Zein et al., 2022; Meza et al., 2019), and even fewer using mixed methods (Peterson & Freidus, 2020). There is a need for more qualitative and mixed methods studies of college food insecurity to gain a more nuanced and contextual understanding of how food insecurity impacts students, especially in the private liberal arts institutional context as much of what is currently written has taken place at larger public institutions or in the community college setting.

In addition, how food security is measured requires adaptation. Many studies utilizing logistic regression (Brito-Silva et al., 2022; Davitt et al., 2021; Patton-López et al., 2014) to predict food security status, struggle to accurately determine food insecurity predictors compared to food security predictors. Given the variance that emerges from the USDA FSSM food security ratings (food security is scored from 1-2, whereas food insecurity is scored from 3-6) (USDA, 2012), it makes it more difficult to pinpoint exact variables that contribute to food insecurity. More accurate food security research tools and instruments are necessary for future college food security literature.

Further research should also study the experiences of other identities impacted by food insecurity such as students in the LGBTQ+ community, children of immigrants, and immigrant

students. Giving light to their experiences helps expand interventions that consolidate and meet various basic needs like housing, food, transportation, and healthcare to name a few.

Methods

Growing interest in food justice, more specifically food security, among the student population at Gonzaga University, spurred a need to address student hunger on campus. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, during my first year of service as an AmeriCorps volunteer, beginning in the fall of 2019 and entering the spring of 2020, in collaboration with students and staff from the Center for Community Engagement, a survey (Appendix I) was created to collect information related to hunger and its impact on campus. Utilizing convenience sampling, we recruited primarily undergraduate students by distributing the survey via email, class announcements, and in-person tabling at the John J. Hemmingson Student Center.

To gauge food security, borrowing from similar studies (Patton-López et al., 2014; Woerden et al., 2019), we adapted the USDA Food Security Survey Module questions framed for households to college-aged individuals using the questions from the USDA Six-Item Module (USDA, 2012). Using Microsoft Forms as our preferred survey platform, the survey was comprised of three main sections: the USDA Six-Item Module questions to establish food security ratings (broken down to three categories: high food security, low food security, and very low food security) (Appendix II), overall food assistance knowledge with an emphasis on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and students' willingness or resistance to applying, demographic information, and financial aid information (this included employment and meal plan questions) (USDA, 2012; Woerden et al., 2019). To incorporate a qualitative component to the survey, we also asked students to describe how food insecurity was impacting their health and academic success.

In total, we collected 445 survey responses or 8.5% of total undergraduate enrollment (5,238 undergraduate students) from January 22, 2020, to March 10, 2020. These survey

responses were then organized to display frequency and prevalence of food security rates among different demographic populations and coded to reflect categorical variables for predictive interpretation of potential food security influencing factors, such as race, first-generation status, undergraduate year[8], and employment status, using SPSS frequency and a binary logistic regression model procedure.

Two years after collecting survey responses, I returned to Gonzaga University with the intention of enriching the survey data with qualitative interviews. At the beginning of this study, there was no intention to use a mixed methods approach, but the mixed methods approach lent itself to link anonymous numbers with lived experiences, thus serving the purpose of integrating different forms of data to triangulate for validation and new insights, potentially exposing blind spots from a single method (Elwood, 2010). As a result of these combined methods taking place at Gonzaga University, a case study emerged. Traditionally, case studies explore a time- and space-bound phenomenon however this study took a non-traditional approach given it was not meant to be bounded in time or over time, but it became the overarching method of data collection that made the most sense to describe how food insecurity emerges in the context of a private liberal arts institution, a place seemingly comprised of students from privileged backgrounds (Alpi & Evans, 2019).

For the qualitative component of this study, I recruited students who were eighteen years or older, self-identified as food insecure (whether currently or in the last two years), and as one or more of the identities most likely to be impacted by food insecurity (students of color, juniors and seniors, first-generation students, and employed students). Students were recruited through

[8] The undergraduate year factor consolidated students on a meal plan and students living off-campus. Underclassmen (freshmen and sophomores) are usually on a meal plan and upperclassmen (juniors and seniors) usually live off campus.

various Gonzaga University contacts such as the Center for Community Engagement, the original collaborator for the food security survey, the Center for Cura Personalis, the Lincoln LGBTQ+ Center, the Unity Multicultural Education Center, and the Communication Studies department via phone call, email, and social media. Those expressing interest in participating were prompted to fill out a registration form or confirm verbally over the phone to coordinate and schedule an interview. Prior to conducting the interview, some participants consented in person and others consented electronically for interviews conducted over the Zoom Video Communications platform. All participants were treated to food and non-alcoholic beverages either in person or for those interviewing over Zoom, offered a $10 Starbucks gift card for their participation in a 45–60 minute interview.

The eight qualitative interviews took place from December 12, 2022 to December 22, 2022. Students were asked open-ended questions regarding their perceived definition of food insecurity, perceived factors influencing food insecurity, perceived barriers to food access (related to procurement and assistance), personal and academic consequences of food insecurity, existing campus interventions (such as the food pantry) and their adequacy, as well as potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on campus food insecurity (Appendix III).

Interviews were then transcribed using the automatic transcript function on Zoom. Quotes were analyzed with a focus on common perspectives as well as experiences that gave way to nuancing the quantitative data initially collected.[9] More specifically, during transcription, I highlighted quotes that addressed one or more of the research questions, using the Microsoft Word comments feature as a method of memoing, or a method of qualitative research aimed to

[9] Most interviewed students chose to use their real names and when I introduce them in chapter 4, I will also describe their demographic characteristics and class year.

help the researcher understand the meaning of emerging themes and concepts from the data collected (Adler & Clark, 2014). Finally, I synthesized the quotes to not only answer the research questions, but also engage and deepen what the literature has already found.

Higher Education, the Great (Un)Equalizer

The pursuit of higher education is framed as the *great equalizer*, an idea that purports higher education as a pathway toward upward mobility and ultimately economic equality (Laiduc & Covarrubias, 2022; Mcphail, 2021). Scholars in the field of sociology of education have studied the *equalization* argument, determining a variety of pathways that higher education can foster on campus and upon exit (Armstrong, Elizabeth A. & Hamilton, Laura T., 2013). Armstrong and Hamilton (2013) found that universities create three types of pathways that influence class trajectories: the party pathway, the mobility pathway, and the professional pathway. For the purpose of this paper, I will only focus on the mobility pathway. These mobility pathways are meant to be inclusive, pragmatic, and vocational to level the so-called "playing field" for less privileged students during their time on campus and beyond graduation (Armstrong, Elizabeth A. & Hamilton, Laura T., 2013). While higher education has contributed to increased opportunities for social mobility, increased income levels resulting from higher education attainment, and expanded access to individuals from nontraditional and marginalized backgrounds (Altbach, 2000; Brennan & Naidoo, 2008), in the words of Pierre Bourdieu, "the structure of the field, that is, the unequal distribution of capital, is the source of the specific effects of capital, that is, the appropriation of profits and the power to impose the laws of functioning of the field most favorable to capital and its reproduction," (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 82). College campuses are institutions that produce economic conditions similar to society at large whereby the effects of the uneven distribution of capital and consequently class-based experiences reproduce financial vulnerabilities like food insecurity (Nash, 1990). At elite or private institutions, where income disparities are wider, these vulnerabilities are experienced at exaggerated levels compared to state or public institutions (Aries & Seider, 2005). I propose the

way that class inequality is reproduced on college campuses, more specifically at a private institution like Gonzaga University, plays a major role and influences food insecurity and food inaccessibility.

First, it is necessary to define class as a positionality in addition to a social structure, to explain how class-based differences and identities are reproduced on college campuses. Unlike race and gender, society treats class as a temporary hardship that education and job mobility are meant to alleviate, rather than an identity characteristic. There is no single or concise way to define class, but for the purpose of its campus manifestations, DiMaggio's (2012) approach to defining class is the most encompassing. DiMaggio proposes that class is rooted from Marxian ideas of work, Weberian ideas of position and lifestyle, and his own idea of identity and class-identification. Marx suggests class is associated with one's occupation and their control and autonomy over their labor (Marx et al., 1932), whereas Weber claims class is determined by educational, lifestyle, and family socioeconomic positions including one's income and where one lives—skills brought to the market (Weber, 1966). Class-identification, argues DiMaggio, shapes how people approach social interactions across class or within class groups (DiMaggio, 2012). This multifaceted definition of class better explains the complex nature of class-based experiences from the very tangible differences in resources to the more intangible feelings of isolation, shame, and blame associated with class.

In Roy Nash's analysis of Bourdieu's work on social and cultural reproduction and its influence on the sociology of education, he describes the school as "the most important agency for the reproduction of almost all social classes,"(Nash, 1990, p. 432). If a school engenders a culture of affluence and privilege, in which only a select few have access to the unspoken rules of navigating higher education (Laiduc & Covarrubias, 2022), it is expected that those who do

not embody those characteristics are likely to feel isolated and unable to access similar resources and benefits compared to their more affluent counterparts (Nash, 1990). Other prominent ideas shaping school culture include the neoliberal principles of individual competitiveness and responsibility, and the so-called meritocratic "American Dream," spreading the message that one's problems are their own fault and one's privileges are their own achievement, not inherent or influenced by societal structures (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008; Buckley & Park, 2019). These false cultural narratives that perceive the student experience as monolithic hinder and obscure the experience of marginalized students.

To counteract dominant narratives surrounding higher education, it is necessary to recognize and acknowledge the differences among students, how these differences create beneficial or precarious situations, and work towards addressing these differences through resource and service adaptation towards individualized needs. Studying food security at Gonzaga University lends itself to a careful examination of these differences. In the following sections (labeled based on quotes from the qualitative interviews), I attempt to not only replicate existing college food security measures, but also describe how intersecting identities, with a particular focus on class, interact or determine food insecurity and problems of food access, and finally whether interventions meet food security needs (Crenshaw, 1989).

Food and Economic Precarities: The Case of Gonzaga University

> I mean, they're definitely intertwined [referring to identity characteristics impacting food insecurity]. I mean, because everything is interconnected, right? So, race and your socioeconomic status is definitely correlated. It's a reason why you're lower class. I mean it's just history, right? We're built on slavery. We were built on [the] exploitation of workers, you know capitalism, like I said. It's just how the system has been, and that's what I've learned a lot recently. But we—it's just once you're in that cycle, it's hard to get out of. And so, across generations of my family, it's food insecurity, you know [being] lower-class, and so I think you

> know, it's—it's difficult to get out of that. – Bradley, a first-generation student of color, a sophomore, and a working student

In my quantitative study of campus food security, the prevalence of food insecurity among students at Gonzaga University was 36% (160 students). Food insecure students were concentrated in the low food security category (19% of 85 students) and less in the very low food security category (17% or 75 students) (compared to 12.8% in the county the institution resided in 2019) (Feeding America, 2023a). The individual food security rating was calculated by adding all affirmative responses ("often," "sometimes," "always," and "yes" are coded as affirmative) to the USDA Six-Item Module questions (a potential raw score of six points) (USDA, 2012) (Appendix II). The more affirmative responses, the higher the score, with higher scores (2-6 points) indicating lower food security or more insecurity. Once these were calculated, the 445 individual food security ratings were averaged to give an overall student body food security rating, earning a score of 2 or low food security designating the overall student body as food insecure without hunger (USDA, 2012).

Table 1, arranged by the categories of race, year, first-generation status, and employment status, describes total percentage of students per category, the percentage of students who appear as either food secure or food insecure per category, and the p-values, or statistical significance for each category.[10] Beginning with the race category, out of the total sample surveyed, more white students (67.3%) are struggling with food insecurity. However, when comparing students who identify as non-white (20.4%) *and* food secure to those who are non-white and food insecure, more non-white students (32.7%) are struggling with food insecurity (Gonzaga University is a predominately white institution, more white students took the survey than

[10] All demographic categories were statistically significant.

students of color). The undergraduate year category indicates out of the total sample surveyed, underclassmen (including freshmen and sophomores) (38.8%) and upperclassmen (including juniors and seniors) (61.3%) struggle with food insecurity. The first-generation category reveals that out of the total sample surveyed, 21.3% of first-generation students and 78.8% of non-first-generation students are struggling with food insecurity. To clarify, fewer first-generation students attend Gonzaga University compared to non-first-generation students. Looking at just first-generation students, twice as many first-generation students (21.3% compared to 10.9%) experience food insecurity compared to first-generation students who do not experience food insecurity. The employment category, the most statistically significant[11] ($p = 0.000$) of the categories, indicates out of the total sample surveyed, an overwhelming 70.6% of working students and 29.4% of non-working students are struggling with food insecurity.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of Gonzaga University students and self-reported food security status (FS) in February 2020 (n = 445).

		Food Security Status		
Characteristic	Total (%)	Food Secure 64% (285)	Food Insecure 36% (160)	Sig.[a]
Race				
White	75.1	79.6	67.3	
Non-White	24.7	20.4	32.7	0.004
Prefer Not to Say[b]	0.2	-	-	
Year				
Underclassmen	45.8	49.8	38.8	0.024
Upperclassmen	54.2	50.2	61.3	
First-Generation				
Yes	14.6	10.9	21.3	0.003
No	85.4	89.1	78.8	
Employed				
Employed	54.8	46.0	70.6	0.000
Not Employed	45.2	54.0	29.4	

[11] A chi-square test is a statistical test used to compare observed results with expected results. The purpose of this test is to determine if a difference between observed data and expected data is due to chance, or if it is due to a relationship between the variables you are studying (University of Southampton, 2023). A relationship exists between categorical variables if the p-value is less than or equal to significance level ($p < 0.05$).

a. Chi-square tests for independence of variables were assessed ($p < 0.05$).
b. For the purpose of running descriptive crosstabs, this variable was removed to reduce variance.

As previous research on college food security suggests, and Table 1 reinforces, certain demographic characteristics influence the likelihood of food insecurity, such as race, first-generation status, undergraduate year, and employment status (Davitt et al., 2021; Dubick et al., 2016; Gaines et al., 2014; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018; WSAC, 2023). At Gonzaga University, students of color, many of which are also first-generation students, students from varying undergraduate years, and working students who were interviewed also echoed what the survey showed, describing how their identities were connected to their food insecurity.

For the qualitative component of this study, every interview began the same way: in your own words, describe food insecurity and do you identify with any of these characteristics?

- Are you a student of color?
- Are you an upperclassman?
- Are you a first-generation college student?
- Do you work?

When I interviewed Jessica, she was taking a break during her shift as a student employee in the Center for Cura Personalis. We were briefly introduced by a professor we both took in Communication Studies. Shortly after our introduction, we came to the realization we had already met two summers ago when I was an AmeriCorps volunteer and she was a summer fellow working out of the same department. This reconnection facilitated the flow of our conversation, blanketing us with a level of trust and comfortability. After responding "yes" to

every identity characteristic question, I asked her if she believed any or all of these characteristics played a role in food insecurity, responding with:

> I would say [being] first-gen, I don't have the financial literacy to budget my way, and be able to find a way to pay for groceries. When I first started actually, to be completely honest with you, I had zero money, because this whole summer I worked just to pay that difference for my tuition. I was trying to get this job, and I knew it would take at least a month, and I'm like 'well, that puts me a month at like $0 for groceries,' and with COVID and everything, the price of groceries [increased] exponentially. It was really hard to find a way to do that. And then, they offered COG swipes[12] but even that, was more expensive than budgeting out $50 a week for groceries. It's just—the math wasn't mathing.
>
> And being a student of color, I would say, it's a generational thing for me. My mom was also juggling multiple jobs to keep a roof over our heads. And I think being here in itself is a barrier, because it's so expensive. So, adding that layer of, 'how am I going to get food?' I think the first two years, it's easy because you're kind of forced to [have a] meal plan unless, you go out of your way to get that approved. And the pressure is way less than being an upperclassman, and having to pay groceries and living on campus, right? And all those things. – Jessica, a first-generation student of color, a senior, and a working student

Like Jessica, many first-generation students are unfamiliar with the structure and unspoken rules (Laiduc & Covarrubias, 2022) of post-secondary education, making it difficult to navigate (this is exacerbated by other identity characteristics like being a child of immigrants). Without knowledge of on-campus or off-campus resources (for example, only 9.7% of first-generation students were familiar with public assistance services like SNAP when the survey was conducted), many first-generation students tend to struggle with issues of food insecurity, housing insecurity, and other related financial insecurities. Furthermore, as stated previously, once a student becomes an upperclassman, the likelihood of food insecurity rises because students are more likely to be off campus, concerned with more bills and expenses, and not

[12] "COG swipe(s)" is a term that students use to describe the university's meal plan meal swipe program. The COG (Circulus Omnium Gonzaga-orum, meaning 'a meeting place for all Gonzagans,') is the name of the dining hall located in the John J. Hemmingson Student Center.

enrolled in meal plans (Payne-Sturges et al., 2018). It is also assumed, students work because they want to build up experience and skills related to their major, however most working students need jobs to cover expenses ranging from tuition, rent, utilities, food, and other necessities.

While some factors are more significant in influencing food insecurity (Table 1), they are not isolated and intersect with other factors. As the literature suggests, students of marginalized backgrounds experience food insecurity disproportionately (Dubick et al., 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018). At Gonzaga University, survey data and qualitative interviews reinforce students of color, upperclassmen who no longer access a meal plan and live off-campus, first-generation students, and working students experience food insecurity at a much higher rate than their more affluent and white peers.

"I Don't Really Have An Option But To Work": Analyzing The Relationship Between Food Insecurity and Working Status

> We're already starting off low on resources. But then we kind of continue, and it's just like an endless cycle of poverty and things like that that just keep affecting us.
> – Alejandra, a first-generation student of color, a senior, and a working student

Alejandra, a Resident Assistant (RA) and Ministry Assistant, balances two jobs, one of which pays for her housing and her meal plan, yet she continues to struggle with food insecurity. Alejandra's struggle as a working student is not isolated. In this section, using quantitative data and qualitative responses, I describe the struggles that contribute to college food insecurity, especially among working students at Gonzaga University.

Taking into consideration the statistical significance (calculated from chi-square tests of all of the variables in relation to food security status) of identity characteristics, particularly the employed characteristic (Table 1), for further analysis, all identity characteristics were converted

to categorical independent variables and entered into a logistic regression model to gain a better understanding of the predictive relationship between potential predictors of food insecurity and food security status (Table 2). The Hosmer and Lemeshow Test, a logistic regression metric that tests goodness of fit, especially for risk prediction models, indicated the predictive model fit the data ($p > 0.05$; $p=0.811$) (Hosmer et al., 2013). Only some of the independent variables were statistically significant, such as employment status and race ($p \leq 0.000$ and $p \leq 0.042$ respectively), indicating a predictive relationship with food security status. Although first-generation status's p-value is 0.066, meaning the confidence level is 93% instead of 95%, it could suggest first-generation status is a potential factor in predicting food security status. The undergraduate year factor was not statistically significant ($p \geq 0.5542$) implying there is not a strong enough relationship with food security status for it to be seen as a predictive factor.

Table 2. Logistic regression model of predictors of food insecurity among Gonzaga University students in February 2020 (n = 445).

							95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
		B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.[b]	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
Step 1[a]	Employed (1)	*0.938*	0.225	17.411	1	0.000	2.554	1.644	3.967
	Race/Ethnicity (1)	0.490	0.241	4.147	1	0.042	1.632	1.019	2.616
	First-Generation (1)	0.536	0.292	3.382	1	0.066	1.709	0.965	3.027
	Year (1)	0.134	0.220	0.371	1	0.542	1.144	0.743	1.761
	Constant	-1.418	0.198	51.439	1	0.000	0.242		
	Percent Correct								
	Food Secure	87.0		Overall	66.2				
	Food Insecure	28.9							
	Model Significance[c]	0.000							
	Hosmer & Lemeshaw[d]	0.811							

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Employed, Race/Ethnicity, First-Generation, Class.
b. $p < 0.05$
c. $p < 0.05$
d. $p > 0.05$

The model accurately predicts food security status 66% overall, accounting for 87% of food secure instances and 29% of food insecure instances ($p<0.000$). Consistent with other studies (Davitt et al., 2021), this suggests that the model more accurately predicts food security,

not food insecurity, complicating what I initially set out to study. The way the USDA 6-item Module (USDA, 2012) is structured (0-1 signifying food security whereas the range 2-6 signifies food insecurity) reveals predictability models can lack accuracy because of the variability, or lack thereof, between the two categorical variables of food security and food insecurity, impeding the ability to explain the variation in the data and potentially understating the Exp(B) or the Odds Ratio for the significant variables, thus increasing data analysis errors. Odds Ratio (OR) is a measure of association between a variable and the likelihood of an outcome occurring, representing the odds than an outcome will occur given a particular exposure, compared to the odds of the outcome occurring in the absence of that exposure (Szumilas, 2010). Odds ratios are used to compare the relative odds of the occurrence of the outcome of interest (e.g., food security status), given exposure to the variable of interest (e.g., race, first-generation status, class year, and employment status). The odds ratio can also be used to determine whether a particular exposure is a risk factor for a particular outcome to compare the magnitude of various factors for that outcome (i.e., OR=1 Exposure does not affect odds of outcome; OR>1 Exposure is associated with higher odds of outcome; OR<1 Exposure is associated with lower odds of outcome). Working students were nearly three times as likely to experience food insecurity (OR 2.554) followed by students of color who were nearly twice as likely to experience food insecurity (OR 1.632). First-generation students and upperclassmen expressed similar predictability but were not statistically significant enough to draw conclusions about their relationship to food insecurity and food security status broadly (OR 1.709 and OR 1.144 respectively).

In conjunction with the results of the logistic regression model, the qualitative responses offer a deeper look at what these numbers tell us. Focusing on working students (as the most

significant predictor of food insecurity), who frequently embodied intersecting marginalized identities, and their experiences, aids in explaining the class-based inequalities that result in their food insecurity. Most students when asked why they work shared a laundry list of expenses that took precedence over food, from rent to medical expenses and some were even responsible for sending money home, like Connor and Jessica:

> I just want to be able to afford my groceries. Because my parents don't pay for that. I want to be able to afford—like I had to go to the ER because I got sick, so I need to pay for that because my parents, [their] insurance, is not really that good. And I got to pay for my medication because I go to the ADHD doctor, which is $150 a month. And then my medicine is $50. So, then I'm like, "okay, got to put that first!" And then so if I could—and the only reason I'm on the ADHD medicine is just because I'm in college! I mean that's a different thing. But I mean I kind of—I need the money, and I kind of need to work. But I definitely think it kind of is necessary for me to work in college. – Connor, a non-first-generation white student, sophomore, working student

After we spoke animatedly about Connor's Cherokee ancestry and how this part of their identity shaped the way they viewed the value of food and food insecurity, I asked them why they worked.[13] Connor was the first participant to describe their medical expenses. Granted exogenous economic shock has been described in campus food security literature before (Gaines et al., 2014), personal medical expenses, especially those not completely covered by health insurance like mental health services (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2023), have not been addressed as extra expenses contributing to food insecurity explicitly. These added responsibilities make working a requirement for students like Connor.

> I work because I have bills to pay outside of my school being paid for by loans. I have to pay my car, groceries, gas, transportation. I also have younger siblings that I send money to, so I have a lot of responsibilities outside of just being a student. Where I don't really have an option, but to work. – Jessica

[13] I refer to Connor using they/them pronouns throughout this thesis.

For Jessica, being a daughter of immigrants means sharing economic responsibilities with her parents. As soon as children of immigrants are able to work, many fueled by guilt, begin working to alleviate their parents' financial hardships (Nichols & Guzmán, 2017). Compared to her peers, she is overwhelmed with responsibilities, not only for herself as an independent student, but also for her family.

To further determine how reliant their ability to feed themselves was tied to their work status, I asked students whether they could feed themselves without a job. Immediately, I observed from their incredulous facial expressions and sarcastic laughs, when posed with the question: "If you weren't working, would you have difficulty feeding yourself?", that students *needed* to work. Bradley, a soft-spoken sophomore, recounts his first year at Gonzaga describing how not having a job impacted his health:

> Yes, because considering I didn't work last year, I did find myself in my room mostly [where] I wasn't doing anything, just not eating. But also, because it gets dark so fast as well, a seasonal depression, kind of thing. And so, when you're not getting nutritional value, it's hard to be productive. And then it's just overall a terrible experience! So, I think it definitely plays into the whole, if you have food, it definitely helps. – Bradley

Many college food security scholars have studied the psychosocial effects of food insecurity on college students (Brown, 2019; Meza et al., 2019; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018). However, the link between working, food insecurity, and psychosocial effects like depression, I believe have been underexplored. Here, Bradley makes a clear link between not working, not eating, and feeling depressed and unproductive.

This dependence on work also brought up feelings of deservingness and shame around asking for help, especially from parents and public assistance services, which I explore further in the food access section.

> I saw that they [referring to her parents assisting in paying for expenses] would always think of it as like, "oh, no, it's fine. You need this education! You know this is—we want to do this for you." And so, I took this job to also relieve some of that stress on their end. So that's great. So, if I didn't have this job, I think that stress would be having to pay my rent and then the food comes next. And realistically, I know myself, I would fly to my parents and be like, 'I only need x amount for groceries,' when I need a lot more [or] I am out [of money], when I say that I'm not, things like that. – Alejandra

Throughout our interview, Alejandra frequently brought up not feeling deserving of help. She explained how growing up in a small agricultural community in Central Washington, watching her parents work from five in the morning to four in the afternoon, exhausted from the day's work, shaped the way she asked (or did not ask) for help, especially when it came to food. After witnessing her parents' sacrifice, honoring that sacrifice meant practicing as much independence as possible by balancing two jobs and being a full-time student.

Analyzing the relationship between working status and food security exposes the unbalanced economic burden working students experience that makes them vulnerable to a host of financial and food precarities. As a result, students also become susceptible to poor academic performance as a result of hunger-induced reductions in productivity and motivation (Brown, 2019; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018), and negative feelings around deservingness (Meza et al., 2019). Without work, on top of being unable to afford food and rent, students like Connor cannot attend their appointments and pay for their ADHD medication, Jessica cannot send money to her younger siblings, Bradley cannot meet his nutritional and academic needs, and Alejandra cannot prevent the guilt that comes with potentially relying on her parents to assist in meeting her basic needs. The following section analyzes the barriers introduced in this section in depth.

"The Work of Having to Buy Groceries": Barriers to Food Access

> Gonzaga is also located in a food desert. So, if you do want good food either you have to be ready to spend or have access to some type of vehicle or willingness to take the bus. And with it getting dark really early, just to think about is it worth, you know, the ride, the time it [takes], things like that? – Akon, a first-generation student of color, sophomore, working student

Food access barriers are frequently understood as financial barriers. College food security research challenges this understanding by asking new questions regarding non-financial barriers that also impede food access, such as time, transportation, geographic location, ability, and limited dining hall hours (Gaines et al., 2014; Peterson & Freidus, 2020). At the introduction of this section, Akon describes being geographically located in a food desert, bound to campus without a vehicle (or at the mercy of the bus schedule), and constrained by time, limiting her access to food. I also seek to understand more about non-financial barriers to food access but expand this line of inquiry to include barriers that impact access to public food assistance—particularly SNAP access. Unlike the qualitative interviews, the survey did not focus on broad food access barriers, but when revisiting the survey, responses around food and public assistance knowledge as well as perceived barriers to accessing these services,[14] developed the research question to treat food access as not only access to financial resources to purchase food through personal wages, but also financial resources in the form of public benefits.

Over half (62.9%) of students surveyed indicated they were aware of public assistance services like SNAP but had not accessed these services for a variety of reasons like not knowing where services were located (33.3%), a difficult application process (3.1%), discomfort with asking for help (11.2%), transportation and support to access these services (2.9%). Other reasons included not knowing or not believing they were eligible, eligibility restrictions for

[14] Students were limited to a list of barriers but had the option to write in what they believed were barriers to food and other public assistance programs.

students, stigma, and citizenship status. These perceived barriers are similar to what working students reported in qualitative interviews. While many had the opportunity to take advantage of the CARES Act: Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund and receive emergency grants to fund economic hardship (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2023) and access SNAP,[15] of the eight students interviewed, only two took advantage of the funding, the others stating they were unsure whether they deserved to access it. Now that these programs have sunset[16] and work restrictions have become stricter (USDA, 2021), they are aware their odds of accessing SNAP, accounting for their full-time status and inconsistent work hours, are stacked against them. Furthermore, many already have too many time constraints and competing responsibilities that make it harder to pick up more shifts or take on extra part-time work for the purpose of accessing public benefits.

Returning to broader food access challenges, consistent with other studies (Gaines et al., 2014; Peterson & Freidus, 2020), access to cooking facilities and tools was brought up by Amari, a sophomore living on campus.

> Gonzaga recently just took out all of their pots and pans [from] the dorms. So, if you want to be able to cook a meal for yourself, you have to provide that yourself, which I know a lot of people don't. – Amari, a first-generation student of color, a sophomore, and a working student

Local to Spokane, Amari mentioned feeling lucky to have her family so close by, giving her the ability to go home to have meals with her family whenever she chooses, but like Alejandra, she did not want to rely on her family constantly, opting to work and buy her own food. Without the

[15] College student SNAP eligibility temporarily expanded as a result of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (USDA, 2021).

[16] Sunset refers to a program, agency, regulation, etc., expiring or terminating automatically at the end of a fixed period unless renewed by legislative action.

tools necessary to cook meals and restricted to small kitchen and refrigerator space, it is likely students living on campus, like Amari, have a hard time making their own meals, relying on purchasing ready-to-eat meals, such as fast food or hot foods from grocery stores or other retailers that sell food, including campus dining. As the cost of these ready-to-eat meals begin to add up, students must make decisions around which basic needs to prioritize, whereas if students had the facilities and tools to cook, purchasing groceries to cook meals could be stretched out for longer periods of time.

Other similar perceived food access barriers from the survey, including stigma and discomfort in asking for help, were reiterated in interviews. Additional barriers that were not addressed or mentioned in the survey, such as resource knowledge and the role of being a child of immigrants and how it reinterprets feelings of deservingness and shame, became apparent through qualitative data collection.

> I think there's a big mentality and *stigma* around it. I also [know] people, [that are] always in the situation like, 'no, someone else has it worse [and] they need it more.' And that's a big cycle to try to get through, to [make yourself believe], 'well, you can't always think that someone else has it worse than you, and you can't receive help because of that.' Sometimes people just don't know. [As if saying], 'I know something you don't know about the resources.' – Jay, a first-generation student of color, sophomore, not a working student

Jay's circumstances were distinct from other students interviewed for this study. She fit some of the identity characteristics, making her eligible for participation, but at the time of the interview did not identify as food insecure. Nevertheless, prior to her attending Gonzaga University, she had experienced food insecurity and worked extensively in high school to make attending university possible. As a high school student, she utilized SNAP assistance and frequented her community food pantry. This previous experience is what she describes in her quote around

stigma. Her saying “someone else has it worse and they need it more,” is a common belief throughout college food security literature and these interviews, insinuating only a severe level of food insecurity or extreme poverty warrants assistance, otherwise it is condemnable. She goes on to explain the importance of reframing deservingness around lack of knowledge or awareness of resources as a barrier to food access.

> And so, she [referring to her mother] would use the food bank as a resource. But also, she’d think, “oh, we can't go too much because we're not—we don't have it that bad.” Even though we did, we, we were struggling but she was like, “no, other people need these resources too. I don't want to mooch off of the government.” That kind of not wanting to play into [the] stereotype of just “immigrants and [agricultural] workers that are taking resources from the government.” And so, then you kind of just [have] to struggle. You struggle, but you don't fit the stereotype, but realistically it doesn't matter, because they don't see that. – Alejandra

The way Alejandra’s mother views using emergency food system and public assistance services as Alejandra describes, is largely attributed to anti-immigrant rhetoric around immigrants taking advantage of government services that supposedly do not correspond to them because of their non-citizen status. Even though SNAP has never been available to undocumented immigrants, it has been available for their U.S. born children (Twersky, 2019). Alejandra can access these services, but she does not want to confirm a stereotype that has the potential to affect her family; instead she chooses to endure economic hardship. As she states, “you struggle, but you don’t fit the stereotype, but realistically it doesn’t matter because they don’t see that.” Whether one accesses public assistance or endures struggle, changing perceptions around immigrants having the same access to public assistance as U.S. citizens is a difficult task, one that until it is changed, will continue to affect students like Alejandra.

Another interviewee mentioned a not previously researched barrier, personal safety. Bradley asked, “Is it safe?” when referring to purchasing groceries at the nearby, exorbitantly priced grocery store or busing to the cheapest grocery store five miles away from campus. When our interview took place, it was the start of winter, meaning the days would become shorter and darker, forcing students to decide whether purchasing groceries after class or after work was safe, creating a hazard in acquiring food.

As a student, acquiring food is no easy task without tangible financial resources. Nevertheless, we cannot blindly assume that is the only thing that works against a student’s ability to access food. In the next section, I describe how Gonzaga University’s food pantry works to alleviate barriers to food access, while also considering the potential it has to work against food access needs.

“Because I Don’t Want Your Leftover Beans”: Conversations Around the Food Pantry

“‘Cos it’s in a nice box, you wouldn’t know it’s a food pantry.” – Amari

Welfare rollbacks in the 1980s resulted in the proliferation of food pantries and ultimately the institutionalization of emergency food programs (Dickinson, 2017). With limited public support and a failing labor market, many individuals in poverty were forced to become dependent on these programs to meet their basic needs. The rising need for emergency food programs shifted federal funding from welfare programs, and thus the responsibility of the state, to non-profit agencies to carry out these services. Now, we see food pantries established and housed in faith-based organizations, but are now increasingly being ran by non-profit and community organizations like senior centers, grassroots organizations, schools, and college campuses (Dickinson, 2017).

The very first and the longest-running college food pantry was established twenty-five years ago at Michigan State University (MSU) through the collaborative efforts of former secretary Bea Mott and the graduate student government (Callahan, 2018). The MSU Student Food Bank is the pioneer of college food pantries run by students for students. College food pantries, while not a long-term fix to student hunger, can offer an immediate service to fulfill acute or short-term hunger needs.

In 2020, discussions around establishing a campus food pantry were taking place, but at the beginning of this research, Gonzaga University did not have a food pantry, partly because of sentiments described by former Director of the Center for Cura Personalis, Sean Joy, in an interview concerning the opening of the food pantry, “We do have a lot of students who have a lot of means and access to things,” Joy said. “When I first started here, the general feeling was that we have a lot of students who have a lot of privileges in different ways, a lot of them financial. But, we also know that that's not the case for all of our students.” (Apprill-Sokol, 2022).

He acknowledges differences in privilege among the student population, an important step forward, but it is the common assumption he describes of privilege as the norm at Gonzaga University that is harmful and delays meaningful basic needs services for students. That is why, when we surveyed students, we asked if they would utilize a campus food pantry or other resources to establish concrete data that would back a food security intervention on campus. A little over half (50.6%) of the students surveyed expressed interest in a campus food pantry and just over two years later, two campus food pantries popped up on Gonzaga’s campus, one in the John J. Hemmingson Student Center and the other in the Humanities Building (HUB) (featured in Figures 4, 5, and 6).

Figure 5. Gonzaga Community Pantry is pictured on the second floor of the Humanities Building (HUB).

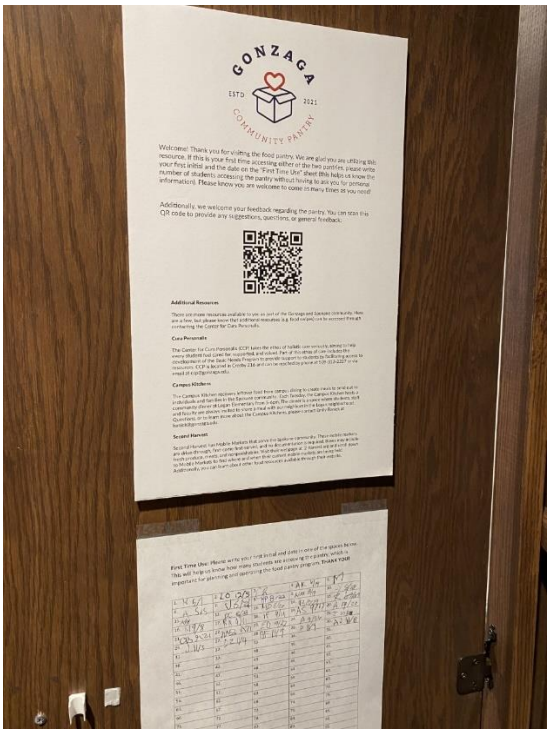

Figure 4. Gonzaga Community Pantry welcome message and instructions on the "First Time Use" sheet.

Figure 6. Inside the Gonzaga Community Food Pantry, pictured are various canned and other shelf-stable items.

Establishing a food pantry on campus was celebrated campus-wide and for the first few months was perceived as a positive and food justice-forward initiative to equalize food access and reduce food insecurity. But like any other stigmatized emergency food system, feelings of shame took the excitement's place. While some students have said that it has helped cover their feeding needs, inadequacies with the food pantry remain, especially those related to location, stigma, and food variety and freshness.

Students regarded the food pantry location in one of two ways, either inadequate, because it seems to push a narrative that accessing these services should be hidden or invisible, or adequate because it helps reduce embarrassment and shame that comes with accessing the food pantry. Both are really two sides of the same coin.

> Honestly, because the first one that's in Hemmingson [is] downstairs in the basement, in that corner, and it's in a small cabinet that you wouldn't even know is a food pantry. Also, the second one is in a smaller building that has maybe four classrooms in it, so that not many people go there. It's also upstairs. It's not like there's [any] real signs [saying] 'food pantry this way.' You know what I'm saying? – Bradley

Bradley was the most vocal about how the location of the food pantry was inadequate. He viewed both food pantry locations as attempts to hide the fact that there are food pantries on campus. The limited advertising, a problem reported in other studies (Brito-Silva et al., 2022; El Zein et al., 2022), makes food pantries inaccessible for students.

> Yes, I will say, yeah. I do like where they are, because they are pretty—it's not like they need to be hidden, but I do like it. It's not really something—I don't want to be mean, but it is kind of embarrassing, seeing people, I know. And then going down in there to get food. Not that it's embarrassing—I don't know how to put it in words, but it's not something [I] really want people to know about me, that I get food from the pantry. Because I don't know, [the] kind of the people around me, and especially [the] kind of [people] in my major, they don't really need to go there. All of them, I mean, they don't really need to do that. They don't even think

> about going to a pantry, and then let alone know about it. And so, I would say it is, it is pretty nice, because they are in the corner and not a lot of people are really ever around it. – Connor

Connor had very positive comments about the location of the food pantry for the same reasons Bradley describes make the locations inadequate. Connor prefers the locations of the food pantry because they offer anonymity for them, assuring they will not have to interact with one of their more privileged peers to limit judgement.

Stigma and stigma reduction also received mixed responses. Some students saw the food pantry as a form of stigma reduction, while others believed it did little to nothing to reduce stigma around accessing the food from the food pantry.

> I would say what's interesting at Gonzaga, is a lot of people make comments about food and [the] frequency of their meals. And I don't know if it's a financial thing, I don't know if it's a 'they're studying all day, and they, they can't—they're forgetting to eat,' or something else. But I think, I think so [referring to the food pantry as stigma reduction]. Because every time I've heard people talk about it, it's always [in] a positive way, 'oh, it's a thing!' The people that know about it are thankful and happy that it exists on campus. I think there just hasn't really been a conversation had on campus about it. And I think it's doing a disservice to the to the food pantry and the work that everyone did to get it there—to for like, you know because it is a really good resource to students. – Alejandra

Alejandra regarded the food pantry and its efforts positively, only pointing out the lack of discussions and awareness around food insecurity and the food pantry. She believes the food pantry is beginning to alter the stigma around food insecurity and food assistance towards a positive light, so long as conversations around these topics continue.

> It's a big chest. So, it's like they don't want to advertise that they have hungry students. – Amari

Amari on the other hand reiterated Bradley's point about not wanting to advertise the food pantry, implying the inconspicuous appearance of the food pantry is a way to intentionally hide student hunger, therefore making hungry students invisible.

> I think here, especially at Gonzaga, me and my friends went yesterday [to the food pantry] to get some stuff so we [could] make food later. I don't know. I looked around me, and then there [were] other people that [were] just looking at us. [What you saw were people who looked like they were thinking], "Oh, these people are taking food from the food pantry because they need it." It's kind of—I don't know, it feels embarrassing because you don't want other people to know. – Bradley

At a private institution like Gonzaga University, it is commonly understood among the student population and broader campus constituents that students who attend Gonzaga University are usually economically privileged. For students who come from less advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, as Bradley describes, it feels embarrassing to display this difference through accessing a campus food pantry. It is easier to navigate attending the institution, by not revealing socioeconomic status, as a method to level the field and not experience disparate treatment.

When it came to food variety and freshness, while there was a consensus of appreciation for the opportunity to access any kind of food, there was also a consensus around what the food pantry currently offers was not adequate (there was a resounding dissatisfaction with the beans).

> There's nothing fresh in there. It's kind of depressing, actually, because it's all just old stuff that [has collected] dust. I mean I know these are—I don't know how really it works, but I worked at the food pantry back in Alabama and all of it was really through donations from the grocery store. And I mean, I don't know if that's what the case [is] here, but a lot of this stuff just seems kind of old. It's really just beans, I mean. I can only do so many beans. – Connor

Unsuitable food is a common deterrent to campus food pantry access (Brito-Silva et al., 2022; El Zein et al., 2022). Pantries understandably offer shelf-stable items that last longer than fresher, but consequently more perishable food items. Nevertheless, the lack

of fresh items and variety of food choices gives the impression that hungry students only deserve food that no one else wants like Jessica describes below.

> I mean, it's very much like, ‘oh, here's the leftovers of what we don't want. Yeah, so here.’ It's food, but the point isn't to—I can go buy beans for 50 cents. The same beans that you're giving out. That’s not the point. The point is I would like to buy a plethora of groceries and think, ‘oh, I'm gonna get all the nutrients,’ and that [I] don't have to worry about the rest of the week because it's paid for. That's the problem. Not filling a cabinet that would probably only suffice a couple of students. – Jessica

The food pantry is not the perfect or even the only solution to college food insecurity, but it is important to acknowledge that it is a step in the right direction. Giving students the space to voice their satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and suggestions is the only way to tailor services that meet their needs and even their preferences, cultural and personal. There is always room for more improvement and as Jessica describes,

> I know that there's [a] better way to do it, you know, I think it was proposed really well. Aside from the way it's being carried out, the location, the drives—I think this school as a whole has a really bad way of addressing needs when, so many people, hold so many privileges, including myself. But the point is [why] don't [we] reflect on that, and think, “oh, if we don't have resources to give out, we could give out advocacy [services],” and stuff like that. There [are] other ways to go about it than just like a designated spot where, people put cans that others don't want, you know. – Jessica

Conclusion: "How Are You Going to Help Students? Nobody Answered Me, Of Course." Working Towards Educational Equity And Food Justice

> It's no longer going to be tolerated. People are getting tired of this now. If it means not pursuing a higher education, then that's going to happen. It's getting too expensive to even use that as a steppingstone to becoming financially liberated, you know, especially for people who are low income. It's not statistically—it's not happening anymore. So, how are you going to retain students like us? First of all, because where else are we gonna go? And then my brain is like, 'this goes—this plays out into voting, this goes down into communities.' – Jessica

I open this conclusion with a quote from Jessica, my very first qualitative interview participant. She agreed to meet with me to discuss college student food insecurity during her finals week, snowballing me into other students, whose thoughts and feelings contributed to the writing of this thesis. What she described and other students echo, and what I argue in this thesis, is that higher education is not the great equalizer. Rather, it is a microcosm of the reproduction of capital and its unequal effects. Higher education may have once served to equalize but changes in the economy, class structure, and the labor market have weakened higher education's ability to equalize today (Armstrong, Elizabeth A. & Hamilton, Laura T., 2013). Food insecurity, food inaccessibility, and food security interventions are some of the many ways we see the effects of this reproduction of capital take place.

As recent as 2009, scholars have investigated college food insecurity, its potential predictors, and resulting consequences of not having secure access to adequate food (Chaparro et al., 2009; Hagedorn-Hatfield et al., 2022). Various studies place student food insecurity at a higher rate than the general population, ranging from 20% to 50%, resulting from an increasingly more expensive college price tag and the expanding access of higher education to students from nontraditional backgrounds such as students of color, first-generation college students, working students, and students from lower-socioeconomic backgrounds. Nontraditional students do not

always have the same access to financial resources as their economically privileged peers, producing economic precarities, food access barriers, and higher rates of food insecurity.

At Gonzaga University, 36% of students surveyed reported being food insecure, from those students a large majority were students of color, first-generation college students, upperclassmen living off campus and without a meal plan, and working students, replicating the findings of other studies. What this study revealed is that working students are almost three times (OR=2.554) as likely to be food insecure compared to other students. This vulnerability was explored further in qualitative interviews by many students who described working as a necessity to cover a range of basic needs, including food, as well as outside responsibilities like financial provision for family members.

To meet their food needs, students described a variety of barriers, financial and non-financial, not only impacting food acquired by wages, but also food acquired with public assistance, like SNAP. Some barriers were more tangible like transportation and cooking facilities and tools, and others were more intangible, like stigma, knowledge of resources, safety, and negative feelings of deservingness influenced by being a child of immigrants, for example. An alternative way students have attempted to meet their needs and challenge these barriers is by accessing their on-campus food pantry.

Despite the campus food pantry not existing when the survey was conducted, the survey revealed an interest in food pantry access on campus (50.6%). Growing interest in a campus food pantry helped establish Gonzaga University's first food pantry, an intervention geared towards reducing food insecurity. While some students wholly believe in the vision of the food pantry, other students were more critical of its operation. There were mixed views about the food pantry's location, its role in stigma and stigma reduction, and food variety and freshness.

Students who saw the food pantry more favorably described its location as adequate in reducing shame and stigma (its hiddenness made it easier to remain anonymous) and some were just grateful that there was plenty of food. The students more critical of the food pantry critiqued the location for making it seem like food assistance had to be a secret, therefore not reducing stigma and perpetuating class differences, and others were disappointed the food pantry did not offer fresh food. Even so, nearly every one of the students interviewed has accessed and continues to access the food pantry to meet their food needs.

The student experience at Gonzaga University is a misunderstood one and one that has morphed significantly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a private institution, Gonzaga University has a reputation for economic privilege, contributing to the invisibilization of students who do not embody this economic privilege. This study, complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic that took place between survey collection and conducting qualitative interviews, does not account for all the effects the pandemic had on exacerbating food insecurity. Nevertheless, it is a call to action, that utilizes quantitative and qualitative data to uncover class-based inequities and seeks to use this data to change the way students, especially those who experience food insecurity, are supported.

It is difficult to change narratives, especially mainstream views of higher education. Nevertheless, it is necessary to make the attempt to counter narratives. As Harrison & Price (2017) suggest, there are three major reasons why better narratives around higher education are needed. First, narratives are socially constructed, meaning higher education, in its current social construction, reproduces socioeconomic inequality, privileging affluent students over students of lower socioeconomic status. Changing the social construction of higher education, to one that recognizes individual differences and prioritizes equitable access to resources to all, can reduce

the effects of economic precarity. Second, narratives have the power to change underlying beliefs. The way we see ourselves and others affects what we believe or do. For example, changing the narrative around students who work to one that acknowledges the multitude of reasons behind why they work, and why regardless of their employment status, still struggle with financial vulnerabilities. Third, narratives can provide incentives for change. If we were to treat higher education as a form of work or consider it a public good instead of a private good, it has the potential to motivate policy change that makes higher education eligible for public assistance programs[17] and accessible to all (Harrison & Price, 2017).

Students at Gonzaga University are already beginning to counter narratives. In concluding their interviews, students were prompted to question or comment on my research or ask something of their institution. Most students stayed on the topic of food insecurity, suggesting a more critical focus in combating food insecurity on campus by paying closer attention to cultural differences and dietary preferences. One student ended her interview with a message for Gonzaga, but also a message I recommend other universities consider:

> I feel like the people I talk to in cultural clubs, the resounding critique is always, 'GU you have to do better.' And I think, piece by piece, it's getting there slowly. But I would really like to see, I don't know—for you [GU] to be aware of how these little things could impact a person—they're not even little. They're quite large things [that] impact a [student of color] on campus, or any student who is experiencing something that is hard or rough instead of just, 'here's an email announcing it, thoughts and prayers.'—Jay

[17] "The Enhance Access to SNAP Act (EATS Act), introduced by Reps. Jimmy Gomez (DCA), Josh Harder (D-CA), and Jimmy Panetta (D-CA), would permanently expand SNAP eligibility to students who attend college part-time or more by amending the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to include "attending an institution of higher education" as a form of qualification the same as work. Under H.R. 1919, SNAP would no longer require eligible students to perform work study or 20 hours per week of outside employment in order to receive critical nutrition." (U.S. Congressman Jimmy Gomez, 2021)

Beyond countering narratives, universities, many of which take pride in their commitment to their students, must also uphold this commitment and act by providing solutions that mitigate vulnerabilities like food insecurity. Universities must change the structure of meal plans, extend dining hall hours, implement and consolidate food pantry operations with campus gardens, supply emergency assistance funds, enable swipe sharing, and utilize their institutional power to advocate for policy changes that expand SNAP eligibility for college students. Accessing food is a necessity, but one that comes with a stigma. Making accessing food a normal part of daily campus operations should be a top priority.

Even so, universities should not be the only institutions responsible for implementing changes that better support students. Federal and state policymakers should advocate for emergency aid investment, expanding the National School Lunch Program, prioritizing postsecondary education in public benefit programs, improving students' access to public benefits, and introducing Hunger Free Campus legislation (The Hope Center, 2021).[18] For higher education access and success broadly, policies should promote increased affordability by increasing the Pell Grant maximum, reducing the interest rate on student loans, and remove unnecessary restrictions that inhibit students in need from accessing emergency or need-based grants (AccessLex Institute, 2021).

As more nontraditional students enter higher education institutions, the more we as researchers, as educators, and as university employees, should pay close attention to their experiences and their struggles. Without this careful attention, how can we meet the needs of *all*

[18] Swipe Out Hunger influenced the Hunger Free Campus Bill, which sends funding to public colleges who are addressing student hunger on campus. Since its passage in California, each state who has adopted the Hunger Free Campus Act has adapted it to their unique needs. The Bill enables colleges to start a Swipe Out Hunger program, establish food pantries, and create SNAP enrollment opportunities (Swipe Out Hunger, 2020).

students and foster an environment that encourages equitable education attainment *and* overall health and wellbeing?

Appendix I

Food Insecurity Survey

According to the national Students Against Hunger organization, 20% of students at four-year colleges and universities experience food insecurity. To get a better picture of food insecurity on Gonzaga's campus, we are conducting a brief survey. Using the information we receive through the survey we hope to identify the needs that exist and start conversations about how those needs can be met.

Your responses will be anonymous and will not be linked to you personally. The responses to this survey are intended solely for research purposes. Thank you for your participation.

Food Security

Food security is a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

The next set of questions are meant to gauge where students rate on the food security scale. Please select the answer that matches closest to your current situation.

1. Respond to the frequency in which the following statements occur while at Gonzaga.
    a. I worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more.
        i. Never
        ii. Rarely
        iii. Sometimes
        iv. Often
        v. Always
    b. The food that I bought just didn't last, and I didn't have money to get more.
        i. Never
        ii. Rarely
        iii. Sometimes
        iv. Often
        v. Always
    c. I couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.
        i. Never
        ii. Rarely
        iii. Sometimes
        iv. Often
        v. Always
2. While at Gonzaga, have you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?
    a. Yes
    b. No

3. If you responded "yes" to the previous question, how many meals were skipped a day? (Average 3 meals a day) (Write-in)
4. While at Gonzaga, do you feel that food insecurity has had an impact on your health?
    a. Yes
    b. No
5. While at Gonzaga, has food insecurity had an impact on your education?
    a. Yes
    b. No
6. If you responded "yes" to the previous question, how has food insecurity had an impact on your education? (i.e. missed a class, didn't buy a required textbook, dropped a class, not performed as well in academics, etc.) (Write-in)

Knowledge of Public Assistance Programs

7. Do you know about food assistance programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP also known as Food Stamps)?
    a. Yes
    b. No
8. What are barriers to you accessing food and other public assistance services? (Select all that apply)
    a. I didn't know about these services or where they are located
    b. The application process is too complicated
    c. I felt uncomfortable asking for help
    d. It was too far to access these resources or I didn't have a way to get there
    e. Other/write-in
9. Would you utilize an on-campus food pantry or other resources?
    a. Yes
    b. No

Student Demographic Information

10. What is your age?
    a. Under 18 years old
    b. 18 - 20 years old
    c. 21 - 23 years old
    d. 24 - 26 years old
    e. 27 years and above
11. What is your race or ethnicity? (Select all that apply)
    a. White or Caucasian
    b. Black or African American
    c. Hispanic or Latinx
    d. Asian or Asian Indian
    e. American Indian or Alaska Native
    f. Middle Eastern or North African
    g. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

    h. Other/write-in
12. What is your class standing?
    a. Freshman
    b. Sophomore
    c. Junior
    d. Senior
    e. Graduate Student
13. Do you identify as a first-generation college student? (A student whose parents have not completed a bachelor's degree)
    a. Yes
    b. No
14. Are you eligible for the Pell Grant? (Students whose total family income is $50,000 a year or less qualify, but most Pell grant money goes to students with a total family income below $20,000)
    a. Yes
    b. No
15. Are you eligible for work study?
    a. Yes
    b. No

Student Financial Information

16. How are you funding your undergraduate education? (Select all that apply)
    a. Scholarships
    b. Grants (i.e., FSEOG, TEACH, etc.,)
    c. Federal Financial Aid (i.e. Pell Grant, Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans, and Perkins Loan)
    d. Private Loans
    e. Parental Assistance
    f. Out-of-Pocket
17. Do you have a meal plan?
    a. Yes
    b. No
18. Have you ever run out of meal swipes before the end of the term? If so, how many meals?
    a. Less than 5 meals
    b. 5-9 meals
    c. 10-14 meals
    d. 15 or more meals
    e. Not applicable
19. Are you currently employed?
    a. Yes
    b. No

20. If you responded "yes" to the previous question, on average, how many hours do you work each week? (Write-in)
21. What type of employment do you have?
    a. Work-study
    b. Institutional
    c. Off-campus
    d. Not applicable

Appendix II

Assessing Food Insecurity (adapted from U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module: Six-Item Short Form) (USDA, 2012)

(1) Coding Responses and Assessing Households' Food Security Status:

Responses of "often" or "sometimes" on questions 1 (a, b, c) and "yes" on 2, 4, and 5 are coded as affirmative (yes). The sum of affirmative responses to the six questions in the module is the household's raw score on the scale.

Food security status is assigned as follows:

- Raw score 0-1—High or marginal food security (raw score 1 may be considered marginal food security, but a large proportion of households that would be measured as having marginal food security using the household or adult scale will have raw score zero on the six-item scale)
- Raw score 2-4—Low food security
- Raw score 5-6—Very low food security

For some reporting purposes, the food security status of households with raw score 0-1 is described as food secure and the two categories "low food security" and "very low food security" in combination are referred to as food insecure (USDA, 2012).

Appendix III

Interview Guide

Themes	Questions
Food Insecurity	• How many of you have heard of the term "food insecurity"? Can anyone define it? • How many of you would identify as food insecure? • How does food insecurity impact you? Does it impact your academic performance? • What factors do you believe impact food insecurity? • Do you think parts of your identity make you more susceptible to being food insecure? If so, what are those factors? Do you think it's more than those factors?
FS Characteristics	• How many of you identify as a student of color? A junior or senior? As a first-generation college student? • How many of you are currently employed? • Do you think any of these factors play a role in you being food insecure?
Employed characteristic: food service	• As a student, why are you working? • On what do you spend the money that you earn? • If you weren't working, would you have difficulty feeding yourself? • How many students work in food service as a way to acquire/procure food?
Barriers to Food Access	• What do you consider barriers to food access? • Do you think there are more barriers other than financial ones? If so, what other barriers do you believe impact food access? • How do you mitigate the challenges of acquiring food? For example, do you budget your meals, attend events with free food, go on grocery runs with friends, etc., • Are you aware of your eligibility for SNAP? Would you apply to SNAP? Have you ever applied to SNAP before? Are there things holding you back from applying (barriers to access)?
Food Pantry	• Have you heard of the food pantry on campus? • Do you know where it is located?
Access	• Does anyone here currently access the food pantry? • For those who are not utilizing the food pantry, what would you say is the reason for that choice (stigma, were not aware, etc.,)?
Adequacy	• Would you say that the food pantry is meeting the needs of food insecure students and the overall student body?

	• Do you think the location is adequate? • Do you think it is helping reduce stigma around food access?
Changes	• Would you make any changes to the food pantry? If so, what sort of changes would you suggest that meet the needs of students (location, advertising, products, etc.,)? • Do you wish there were more or other food access services than the food pantry?
Impacts from COVID-19	• Do you think COVID-19 has exacerbated campus food insecurity? If so, how has it impacted food insecurity on campus?
Concluding Thoughts	• Other comments or lingering questions?

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Research Interests

Food systems, labor in the food system, farmworker labor and migration, food security, basic needs

Education

M.S., Food Studies, Syracuse University, 2023

B.B.A., Business Administration, Gonzaga University, 2019
Graduated Cum Laude

A.A.S., Direct Transfer, Wenatchee Valley College, 2016
Graduated with honors

Research Experience

Graduate Research Assistant, Syracuse University Department of Nutrition and Food Studies, 2023
Assistant to Dr. Estelí Jimenez-Soto, conducting qualitative data analysis and literature review for article entitled "Agrobiodiversity, plant use, and local ecological knowledge among migrant plantation laborers in a coffee agroforest in Mexico."

Teaching Experience

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Syracuse University, 2021-2023
Responsible for grading assignments, proctoring exams, and holding weekly office hours. Courses include:

- Contemporary Food Issues 102
- Urban Food Systems 402

Learning Assistant, Syracuse University, 2022
Responsible for classroom management and proctoring exams. Courses include:

- Introduction to Culinary Arts 222
- Farm to Fork 304

Professional Experience

Creatives Rebuild New York Intern, Workers' Center of Central New York, 2022-2023
Collected testimonies from members of the Workers' Center
Transcribed testimonies for biographical book project
Assisted in member recruitment and member support activities

Excluded Workers Fund Intern, Workers' Center of Central New York, 2021-2022
Assisted and facilitated completion of Excluded Workers Fund applications
Collected testimonies from Excluded Workers Fund applicants

Campus Kitchen Program Coordinator, AmeriCorps, 2019-2021
Recovered and grew food for 3,000 monthly individual and congregate meals for delivery to low-income residents
Developed and delivered nutrition education to 30 middle school students

Recruited, trained, and supervised 80 student volunteers
Supervised a team of three student leaders

Nutrition Education Associate, Second Harvest Inland Northwest, 2020
Supported Mobile Market Coordinator with building orders and loading vehicles as scheduled
Carried out 98 Mobile Market food distributions
Assisted Nutrition Education Manager with data entry and creation of referral guides for Spokane residents

Worker Rights Consortium Board Representative, United Students Against Sweatshops, 2018-2019
Attended WRC Board Meetings three times a year in Washington D.C.
Advocated on behalf of USAS efforts at executive board meetings
Facilitated organizing strategy workshops for USAS members at National Summer Conference

Publications

Jiménez-Soto, Estelí, Cowal, Sanya, & Lopez, April. (2023). "Agrobiodiversity, plant use, and local ecological knowledge among migrant plantation laborers in a coffee agroforest in Mexico." Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene.

Conference Presentations

2023. Lopez, April. ""Money for Food": A Deeper Look at Food Insecurity and Class Privilege in Higher Education." Conference of the Association for the Study of Food and Society and the Agriculture, Food & Human Values Society, Boston, MA.

2023. Jiménez-Soto, Estelí, Cowal, Sanya, & Lopez, April. "Agrobiodiversity, plant use, and local ecological knowledge among migrant plantation laborers in a coffee agroforest in Mexico." Conference of the Association for the Study of Food and Society and the Agriculture, Food & Human Values Society, Boston, MA.

2023. Lopez, April. ""Money for Food": A Deeper Look at Food Insecurity and Class Privilege in Higher Education." American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting, Denver, CO.

2023. Jiménez-Soto, Estelí, Cowal, Sanya, & Lopez, April. "Agrobiodiversity, plant use, and local ecological knowledge among migrant plantation laborers in a coffee agroforest in Mexico." American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting, Denver, CO.

Honors & Awards

Falk College Master's Prize, 2023
Evan Weissman Graduate Student Scholarship, 2022
Mark & Pearl Clements Internship Award, 2022
Syracuse University Falk College Graduate Assistantship, 2021-2022
President's List, Gonzaga University, 2019
Clarence H. Barnes Legacy Scholarship, 2018-2019
Comstock Foundation Scholarship, 2017-2019
Gonzaga Scholar, Gonzaga University, 2016-2019
Regent Scholarship, 2016-2019
Dean's List, Gonzaga University, 2017-2018
Bridgeport American Legion Scholarship, 2016-2017

Certifications

Internal Review Board Certification, 2021
ServSafe Manager Certification, 2021

Languages

English: fluent in speaking, reading, and writing
Spanish: fluent in speaking, reading, and writing

Skills

Proficient in Microsoft Office
Proficient in Google Smartsheet
Survey Design
Quantitative Data Analysis – SPSS
Qualitative Data Analysis – Dedoose