17 December 17, 2018

Dear Reader,

Reading this letter will hopefully help you gain an understanding of my writings and essays. In this portfolio, there will be three papers that I submitted for English 11000 at the City College of New York. The three papers in this portfolio are a profile paper writing about Henrik Lundqvist’s life, a research paper discussing the negative impacts the pharmaceutical industry has on an average American’s life, and the last one is an analysis paper analyzing the commercial failure of Fallout 76. In choosing topics for these papers, I chose topics that affected me and that I cared about, so that I could write more in depth and meaningful essays. Below I give a description of my works and analyze my strengths and weaknesses, and how I would improve upon these works if I were to rewrite them.

My purpose in writing my profile essay, “The Life of the Greatest: Henrik Lundqvist” was to recap Henrik Lundqvist’s life story and discuss how many key points in his life impacted his career. I chose to write about him as the topic for my profile paper because Lundqvist was a large role model for me in my life, especially growing up. He was my idol and I always dreamed of being like him , and while that dream is out of sights now, I still look up to him. I wanted to introduce others to his story, especially his childhood and rise to fame, which is unknown by most people, even hockey fans. I did a lot of research in order to find many interviews Lundqvist have given in order to piece together his life story and present it in a professional manner to readers.

Despite my research and passion, there are many areas for improvement in the paper. There were many grammatical errors and instances of poor speech in the paper that showed lack of effort and proofreading, taking away from the professional view I was trying to establish. In addition to these technical errors, I was very unsuccessful in describing my reasoning for choosing the topic and the impact Lundqvist had on my life. Every time I brought up my personal life in relation to Lundqvist’s, it felt very clunky and out of place, disrupting the flow of the paper. I feel like if I focused more on that part, I could make it fit in with the paper more and make it feel more fluent, something I will take note on for future papers.

My second paper was the final research paper for the class, “Big Pharma: Why Drug Prices are so High.” Which discussed the rising drug prices and what causes them. I chose this topic because I feel it is a topic that affects all Americans whether it be to a small or large extent, and it is important for people to learn about this. For this essay I did a lot of research to find many articles, journals, and books that help show instances of rising drug prices and present reasons as to why they could be so high. I tried to organize the information that was found in these resources to develop a clear and straightforward argument showing how much drug prices have been increasing and why they have been increasing like such. I provided many examples of high drug prices and provided many reasons as to why they were unfair and how they have come to be like this, in order to have readers be well informed about the topic. I feel the numerous examples helped make the paper seem more credible, and overall be more informational.

While I believe I did a good amount of research for this paper, I believe that I could have done it more extensively in order to have the resources available to discuss the issues more in depth. It would have helped to have more resources to bolster my arguments presented. In addition to this, my essay was very clunky, it did not flow. While there were many very strong arguments, a lot of these arguments were hindered because they were separated from other arguments that would support it well. Focusing more on the organization of the paper would have been very beneficial to the paper.

My third and final paper, “Fallout 76: Is it Falling Out?” was an analysis about the new game Fallout 76, why it was a commercial failure, especially when compared to older games in the otherwise very successful Fallout franchise. I chose this topic because I am a very big fan of the Fallout franchise and was disappointed when I saw that Fallout 76 was not nearly as good of a game as the others. I did a lot of research to find many reviews on the game from different points in its short history and tried to find the developers statements on many of the issues with the game. I also tried to find positive views of the game in order to let the reader have an educated opinion. I feel this extensive research had a very positive effect on the outcome of the paper, especially when paired with my own personal knowledge, and that these two factors led to the paper sounding and feeling very professional and informative. This paper was my favorite to write as it was on a topic that I enjoyed learning more about and I felt very confident in its presentation and quality.

While I feel the paper was very good, it was not perfect. I did not do enough research on the positive sides of the game with only one source for it, I quit too early in the research for that section. This led to the paper sounding more biased than it should have in the end. I also did not go into much detail about the early development stages of the game and could’ve explained that section more in depth to give readers more accurate information. There were also some minor grammatical errors, but nothing that took away from the presentation of the paper.

Every single one of these projects required a lot of time, effort and care from me. While these papers are not perfect and I am not completely satisfied with some points in these papers, I am still proud of my works. Writing these papers also informed me on many things that I didn’t know about while doing research and has made me a more knowledgeable person. Receiving feedback from my peers and professor helped me understand my own writing abilities and really helped me improve. I hope that these papers are both informative and engaging for you to read, and that you gain value from doing so.

Sincerely,

Radley Lupiano

Enclosures (3)

Radley Lupiano

Prof. Bodre

English 11000

29 October 2018

*The Life of The Greatest: Henrik Lundqvist*

 Henrik Lundqvist is one of the most electrifying goaltenders in the NHL today, with his skill and passion for the game making him a role model for many young hockey fans, such as myself. Born March 2nd, 1982, Henrik Lundqvist and his identical twin, Joel, were inseparable as children. Born together in Are, Switzerland, they did everything together, and always stuck with each other in school, with friends, everywhere. According to Boel Blome, their daycare teacher, they were always very close with each other. In daycare, they would pretend to be playing hockey in a little sandbox, as they have always been fascinated by hockey(MSG Networks). At just five years old, Lundqvist went with his family to Gothenburg to watch his first professional hockey game. Despite not being able to recall many memories of when he was five, Lundqvist fondly remembers many things about that day. “This [rink], … its been an inspiration. You know, sitting up there, watching, made me realize what I wanted to do with my life, I wanted to play hockey,”(MSG Networks) he says as he revisits it, talking about the meaning that watching hockey had on his career. Just like how watching his first hockey game live inspired him to play hockey, watching Lundqvist play as a child made me want to ne just like him, and I watched him nonstop.

They used to have to play hockey on a frozen rink with their friends growing up, but an indoor hockey rink was built in Jarpen, a nearby town when they were 8. Every day, Henrik and Joel longed to be able to go to the rink to practice, and while they couldn’t go every day, they went often, and tried to make the most of it. One day, they were playing their first practice game at the rink, and one team didn’t have a goalie. Henrik and Joel’s coach pointed to the goal and ask who wanted to be goalie. Lundqvist had always wanted to be a goalie badly, as he was captivated by all the equipment, but he didn’t have the courage to raise his hand. However, Joel knew how much Henrik longed to play goaltender, so he grabbed his brother’s hand and raised it, yelling “my brother!” (Lundqvist) Eight year old Henrik was extremely excited to play goalie. As he put on the oversized equipment and walked to the net, he kept imagining himself as his hero Pekka Lindmark, who was the current goalie for the Swedish hockey team (Lundqvist). Despite his enthusiasm, it was still his first time and Lundqvist was not fully prepared for it, and was over encumbered by his heavy equipment, and allowed 12 goals that game. That didn’t deter him at all though, he just figured that next game he had to do better. The next game he played he allowed 18 goals. Looking back at his first games, Lundqvist said, “No matter how many goals you let in, the feeling of making just one save makes it all worth it. That’s how you know you’re on the right path,” because as a child, he really, truly loved hockey and knew that it was his calling from when he first saw it live(Lundqvist).

 Henrik Lundqvist, kept improving, and soon it was clear that he had tremendous talent as a goalie. When he was just 15 the Frolunda Indians, the hockey team that Lundqvist first watched when he was 5, reached out to him and his brother, asking them to move there on their own and go to high school and most importantly, play for the team. They didn’t have to think twice about saying yes. Playing for the Indians, Lundqvist showed off his skill and potential to be a great goalie to scouts from the NHL at a young age, showing great promise. In the 2000 NHL Draft, the New York Rangers selected Lundqvist as the 205th overall pick. He stayed in Frolunda to sharpen his kill, until he was ready to join the Rangers in the NHL. While in Frolunda, Lundqvist led his team to a championship in the 2002-03 season, and again in the 2004-05 season. In addition to that, he won the Honken Trophy, which is an award given to the best goaltender in the Swiss Hockey League, three consecutive times from 2003-05. In 2005 he was named the best player in the entire league, establishing his dominance in Switzerland.

After his amazing performance in Switzerland, he joined Rangers to play in the NHL, and that was definitely not a mistake. In his rookie year, Lundqvist was a finalist for the Vezina Trophy, the NHL’s equivalent of the Honken Trophy, and he earned All-Rookie Team Honors, recognizing him as one of the best rookies in the league that year. He broke a franchise record for the most amount of wins by a rookie goaltender with 30, and finished top 5 in the league in both save percentage (.922) and goals against per game (2.24)(NHL.com). His stellar rookie year opened the path of his dominance in New York. Every single season since, except for the shortened 2012-2013 season, Lundqvist has win 30 games, which is no easy feat. In 2012, Lundqvist won the Vezina Trophy and finished third in the MVP race, solidifying his greatness in New York and the league. His other accolades include: Olympic Gold Medal in 2006, and NHL All-Star four times. Henrik Lundqvist is still the New York Rangers starting goaltender today, one of the oldest in the league, but still one of the best.

 As a child, hockey was my favorite sport to watch, and Lundqvist was my favorite player ever. I was amazed by his insane saves, how majestic he looked in goal. I wanted to be just like him as a little kid. Even if that dream is no longer possible today, I wanted to write about him, to learn almost everything about him. He was my biggest role model and I would love to be able to one day meet him and just talk about anything. Today. Writing about him and doing research on him is the closest thing I can do, and it feels great, to be able to put his story together, to be able to encapsulate his emotions as a child, to show what his life was like to the whole world.

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Radley Lupiano

Prof Bodre

 English 11000/A

 !2 December 2018

 Big Pharma: Why Drug Prices are so High

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is one of the most important things that everyone should strive for. One’s health is extremely important because not being healthy will hinder all your actions in life and weaken you both mentally and physically. In psychologist Abrahams Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs, Physiological needs such as food, shelter and your overall health are the most important (McLeod). When it comes to maintaining your physical health, it isn’t an easy task. There are many unavoidable diseases that one can contract, and the most efficient way to heal up is with medication. Some diseases are far more severe than others, requiring medicine in order to survive, whereas others are not nearly as severe, with medicine just used to aid your body’s natural recovery. When it comes to severe illnesses, the cures for these illnesses are usually harder to make and cost more. However, their cost is far too high for a necessity, as many producers take advantage of the fact that it is a necessity and use it to hike up the prices in order to make more money. Because many of these companies have patents on their medicine, they are the only producer of it and can price it however they please. Prices for medicine are far too high and the reasons for their high price do not justify it.

For the past 10 years, the prices for medical drugs have been rising rapidly. An article written by Gina Kolata in 2008 for the New York Times discusses a popular healthcare plan, called a tier 4 plan. “With the new pricing system, … they are charging patients a percentage of the cost of certain high-priced drugs, usually 20 to 33%” (Kolata). This new plan is a change from old plans, where insurance companies would charge a fixed amount regardless of the drug’s price. This new healthcare plan helps healthier people slightly in the long run, but it forces people who get sick often and need insurance more to end up paying significantly more money. Instead of having insurance be able to almost fully cover someone with expensive medication, they still must pay a lot of the price now, where their drugs can cost more than 100,000 dollars a year (Kolata). Many people who use life-saving medication and were able to use it thanks to a fixed-cost insurance policy suddenly had their policy changed and now their vital drugs are far more expensive than they used to be. A recent survey of 2000 Americans showed that almost 70% of Americans believed that health insurance should be significantly cheaper because it was such a necessity for many of them. The survey shows that these expensive health care plans affect most Americans negatively, and they wish health care wouldn’t be so expensive. These insurance policies were and still are far too overpriced and unfair for the average consumer, yet still are only part of the reason that healthcare is so expensive in the US.

A lot of medication is so expensive due to corporate greed coming from big pharmaceutical companies. Many pharmaceutical companies have unreasonably high prices for their products. For example, in July of 2017, a new drug, Endari, was approved for sale. Endari is a drug that treats Sickle Cell Disease and was the only treatment for SCD at the time. While it was great to finally see a drug produced for SCD, it wasn’t perfect. Because Endari was the only FDA approved drug on the market for SDC, its producers had a monopoly on the product, which is when one person or company controls all the good that is sold on the market. Monopolies are capable of making a lot of money since there are no competitors to keep the price down, they can price it as they choose. Medicine and health care is a product with a very inelastic demand, which means that a change in price won’t really affect how much of the product will be bought. Medicine is extremely inelastic because it is a near necessity, even if the price is high people will still purchase it because they need it, and if the price were to decrease people wouldn’t purchase more, they would still just purchase the dosage they need and wouldn’t buy more. In addition to this monopoly, the US government puts no regulations on the sellers of medicine, they are completely unrestricted and truly can price things how they want to (Babar 309). When a monopoly is combined with an inelastic demand, the price can go very high because the sole producer can raise the price as high as he wants due to there being no competition, and people will still purchase it due to it being a necessity, which is a big reason as to why Endari costs approximately 28,000 dollars yearly (Gaby). Although it was a new drug for SDC Endari, for the most part, was just glutamine, an amino acid that has been available for over 60 years but was only discovered to be a concrete treatment recently. Glutamine, unlike Endari, only costs 1,400 dollars yearly. However, glutamine was only seen as a dietary supplement, so it was not approved by the FDA as a prescription drug. Most health insurance providers have policies that say that they do pay for such dietary supplement (Gaby). The policy was created to incentivize companies to search for cures for rare diseases instead of resorting to natural cures that may not be as effective as one researched and made in a lab. While the insurance policy is understandable in most cases like where the disease a drug is being developed for is rare, it does not make sense in situations like this, where a dietary supplement is proven to be both a supplement and an effective treatment to SDC. Companies should not be granted a monopoly of such vital drugs, especially when it affects many people worldwide.

Endari isn’t the only drug with an absurdly high price tag. A report published by the U.S. Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee has published a paper discussing the rise in drug prices. They investigated the 20 most prescribed drugs in 2015 and analyzed how their prices have changed after two years. They found, that on average, the price of these drugs has raised approximately 12% annually from 2012 to 2017, which was around ten times higher than the rate of inflation. In the economy, most goods should raise their prices at around the rate of inflation, and a good having its price increased by tenfold the rate of inflation is far too high. From 2012 to 2017, the 20 most prescribed drugs have seen consistent price increases, with some drugs increasing their price by 477%, once again an unnecessarily high rise. 6 of these drugs have seen their prices more than double (HSAGC). These soaring drug prices are a concern for America and consumers, and if these prices continue to rise at this rate, which they have been doing consistently, it can become a serious concern and these drugs will soon become unaffordable for the average American.

Another example of these high prices is extremely infamous. Martin Shkreli, known as “the most hated man in America”(McDonnell), was the CEO of a small pharmaceutical company. His company was the only company approved by the FDA to produce pyrimethamine, or Daraprim, the only cure to toxoplasmosis, a leading cause of death in foodborne illnesses in the US, according to the CDC. Once he obtained approval from the FDA, the price skyrocketed, as he marked it up by 555%, increasing from 13.50$ all the way to 750 dollars (McDonnell). In a survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation, 77% of Americans stated that they believed his high prices were a primary health concern. To prove how unnecessary the price rise was, and how much it was fueled by greed, Imprimis Pharmaceuticals, a compound company was able to produce pyrimethamine and sell them at one dollar per dose, since compounding pharmacies didn’t require FDA approval. This shows that the pharmaceutical industry has many people that act out of greed, but there are still some that will try to work for the people.

Price rises of drugs aren’t new, they’ve been a problem since 1990. Prices were also on the rise then, and big pharmaceutical companies promised to keep price rises under the rate of inflation (Hancock). While it stopped a little, companies only did enough to appease lawmakers and went back to high prices. Many people acknowledged that this was unhealthy for the economy and consumers, such as Senator David Pryor, saying that "There is no question that we face a growing crisis in the United States due to rising prescription drug prices” (Hancock). It was clear that these prices were a large problem for the US, and despite promises from manufacturers to keep prices low, there was no significant change in price seen, only small, temporary changes that were just to keep consumers somewhat happy. In addition to their high prices, many companies use tactics to help make their prices seem reasonable and try to make consumers feel satisfied. One of these tactics is scaring consumers, making them believe that the most trivial medicine is important for viewers, making them want to purchase them despite the cost. Many drug companies such as Pfizer have aired commercials designed to scare its viewers. An advertisement for Trumenba, a Pfizer produced drug, a meningitis B vaccine, “played scenes in reverse order show how a boy celebrating at a birthday party ended up prone and pale in a hospital bed after his mom mistakenly thought he just had the flu”(Pasquarelli). This advertisement makes parents afraid that their child could end up like this as it shows that the symptoms can be mistaken as those of the flu which is not as severe as meningitis B. Due to this fear, parents will want to rush their child to get the vaccine no matter the cost. These advertisements are very powerful in increasing the perceived severity of the disease in the advertisement. Another company with scary ads is Mylan, which produces EpiPens. Since 2007, the price of an EpiPen has increased by 550%. John Mack says that this isn’t a coincidence, that “a trend with companies, especially ones with injectable drugs and vaccines, which also have big price increases, is to scare people into buying their product or getting their vaccine." Mylan is just another example of companies scaring customers into buying their product at a high price.

In America, drug prices have always been abnormally high since the 90s and have stayed that way since. Today, drug prices keep on rising higher and higher, much faster than the average rate of inflation, so it is starting to become unaffordable for the average American, which should not be happening. Medicine should not be one of the biggest costs in a person's life, even if it is crucial to that person's health. Many companies such as Imprimis Pharmaceuticals have shown that it is possible to sell drugs at a far lower price than it is now, exposing that the high prices aren’t solely because of high costs to manufacture, its also because of corporate greed, many people take advantage of patents and monopolies they have to exploit their customers for the most amount of money possible. This greed in combination with many unfair insurance policies leaves many Americans spending too much of their money on medicine.

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Radley Lupiano

English 11000/A

Prof. Bodre
26 November 2018

Fallout 76: Is it Falling Out?

On May 30th, 2018, Bethesda Softworks, a major video game producer, announced a new game in their extremely popular Fallout series, Fallout 76 (IGN). The Fallout game series was extremely popular, and they all revolved around the same theme; they were all open world single player only games, all taking place in a wasteland after a nuclear war. At the announce of Fallout 76, Bethesda announced that the game would be multiplayer, making it the first one in the series. The announcement was met with a multitude of negative complaints, but it also received some positive remarks, people were interested to see how it would go. At launch, game servers immediately crashed, and when they went back up, the game was riddled with bugs, and gameplay was found to be stale and uninteresting. Fallout 76 is mostly seen as a failure due to these reasons, especially when compared to the earlier Fallout games.

The Fallout games have had many installations, with the two most popular ones being the two most recent, Fallout New Vegas and Fallout 4. These two were both built around the same idea stated earlier, open world, single player games. Both games take place in different parts of America and both have their own unique stories with developed computer characters. People adored these games and they were critically acclaimed, with critics calling it “an engrossing game that lures you in with mystery and the promise of adventure” (Brown). These two games absorbed the player into the game with its deep plot filled with plenty of non-playable characters (NPCs) with developed personalities and deep backstories. These NPCs were part of the charm of the Fallout games, separating them from others. These games were very popular with the public, as New Vegas sold 8.41 million copies and Fallout 4 sold 13.89 million copies, both extremely high figures (Statista). The large popularity of these Fallout games is a large contrast to Fallout 76.

Fallout 76 was widely anticipated by the Fallout community, with most people excited to see what it brought. It was the first Fallout game in three years, and given the tremendous success of the previous ones, Fallout 76 had high expectations. On October 27th, 2018, Bethesda allowed people to pre-order the game, which gave them instant access to a beta, or testing, version of the game (Parrish). This version was found to be filled with glitches and bugs, reported by many of the initial users (Forge Labs). It is usual for a development team to utilize bug reports from a beta version of their game and try to fix them so the game will be running smoothly at launch. However, the beta version of Fallout 76 was released only two weeks before the games announced release date, which wasn’t enough time for developers to completely smoothen out the glitches and bugs. In Bethesda’s November 5th patch notes, which is a list of things changed in an update, they acknowledged and solved some problems that people were experiencing. They fixed many of the visual bugs and tried to increase the stability of the servers, which helped smoothen the game out just a bit (Bethesda). Despite these patches, on the day of release, the game servers had crashed (Forge Labs). Bethesda managed to quickly fix the servers, but the initial crash showed that Bethesda was not fully prepared for launch and that its game was still too buggy. Bethesda released another update on November 19th, once again fixing many bugs and highlighting what went wrong on launch day. As of today, the game is a lot less glitchy, but there are still other problems with it.

Figure 1. An in-game screenshot of a common bug where enemies stand in a T-pose instead of attacking the player (Forge Labs).

As stated earlier, Fallout New Vegas and Fallout 4 were beloved for their story and extensive NPCs. Fallout 76 had neither of these. There is no plot in the game, no storytelling outside of reading files found in the game on computers, unlike in the previous game where the story was told through dialogue with characters (IGN). Even with the limited story given, it was not nearly as absorbing as it was in other games, since in Fallout 76, the only way to understand the story was by reading files on an in-game computer. The only NPCs were enemies, so there was no dialogue there to advance the story, and the lack of NPCs meant that a lack of emotion would accompany it. All other human characters you met in the game were actual people just playing it, so there was no interaction or story to be found there. One large gaming YouTube channel, Forge Labs, discussed the lack of NPCs and story in their review of the game and described the gameplay to be very boring, with there being no character development, and no real tangible plot. The lack of NPCs makes the game far more focused on the multiplayer aspect since the single-player mode was seen to be bland. However, the multiplayer mode also has some problems. Weapons in the game are hard to come by, so players must use basic weapons for most of the time, and you must agree to fight another player before starting a fight. Having to agree to start a fight takes out the suspense of multiplayer mode, as you no longer need to worry about being ambushed (Forge Labs). The gameplay in Fallout 76 pales in comparison to the previous games in the series.

Although there seem to be many gameplay problems in Fallout 76, there is still fun to have. Brandin Tyrell wrote in his review that Fallout 76 still has nice, varying landscape with different places to go and explore. He says that many of these destroyed post-nuclear war settings help set up an eerie tone to the game, especially when accompanied by the music. And while there may not be a lot of storytelling through people, there still is environmental storytelling to be seen if one looks around carefully. The settings and buildings themselves seem to have their own backstory for the player to find out. There is also a lot of new types of enemies in Fallout 76 making your fights feel more diverse. The quests in the game are also rewarding as it leads to you becoming stronger, whether it be getting new guns or starting to build strong armor. In addition to the gameplay, on November 27th, Bethesda announced on their website that they are aware that there are many bugs and problems with the game, and that they want to be transparent with the community and work together to help make Fallout 76 a much better game. This announcement gives hope for the game’s future, knowing that Bethesda is actively working to make Fallout 76 the game people wanted and that they are willing to work with the community lets gamers know that it can truly blossom into another amazing Fallout game. The game currently can still give a player an enriching and fun time playing the game, with promise for it to improve more in the future.

Fallout 76 is a new take on Bethesda’s Fallout game series, introducing a new multiplayer mode, a first for Fallout games. The game upon release was riddled with bugs since release, and was also criticized for having boring, stale gameplay, with the game being too focused on multiplayer mode. For many Fallout fans it was seen to be leaving the original theme of Fallout, with the previous games having rich stories and colorful personalities, especially when compared to Fallout 76. Despite the many negative reviews it was met with, Fallout 76 still deserves credit for being the first Fallout game that can be played and enjoyed with other people at the same time, and Bethesda is still working on improving the game in the future. Fallout 76 currently is seen as a failure when compared to the other titles in the Fallout series, it still has the promise and potential to grow and improve as a game and live up to the legacy Bethesda has built for the Fallout series.

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