Inside English 1010

A Journal of First-Year Writing

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University of Wyoming | Department of English

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Cover Photo: “Devils Tower” by Stephen Walker

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Acknowledgements

Uncertainty. Anxiety. Exhaustion. These words have been used frequently over the past 18 months, as our communities have weathered the world-wide pandemic. From my position as Director of First Year Writing, I'll also offer a different set of words that come to mind as I reflect over the last year: Commitment. Endurance. Strength. Patience. Care. These are characteristics I have witnessed first-hand from the students and instructors in English 1010, and evidence of their inspiring work is contained here, within our fifth volume.

Our student authors deserve a big round of applause for being selected as exemplars of the skill development happening in our classrooms. These students demonstrate smart critical thinking, talent with constructing arguments, and a knack for interweaving their own voices into both scholarly and public conversations. Drawing attention to their work is the gorgeous cover of this year's volume, and gratitude goes to photographer Stephen Walker for the eye-catching rendition of Bear Lodge (also known as Devils Tower), a location of cultural and spiritual significance for many Indigenous tribal groups.

A big thanks also goes to our reviewers: Robby Bishop, Irene Enlow, Stephen Mack, Andrew Meyer, Winona León, and Sarah-Anne Leverette. While they served a central role in the selection and feedback of this year's contributions, they also taught English 1010 during the pandemic, stepping up to be conscientious leaders during the chaos of

2020. A final, loud cheer goes to Cameron Craft, the Lead Editor for this volume. He gracefully and competently attended to everything from gathering submissions, to facilitating reviews, to working with student authors, to producing and proofing the final publication himself. And he did so while juggling his own teaching, graduate courses, and thesis writing. Cameron has been an individual representative of a larger lesson: that a dedicated community can pull together even when unanticipated external forces try to pull it apart.

To all our English 1010 students and instructors, as well as to our journal contributors, reviewers, and editor: I see you and appreciate all you bring to the University of Wyoming and the First Year Writing Program. Your lessons in commitment, endurance, strength, patience, and care will stick with me—and with the department and university as a whole—as we emerge into better times.

Nancy Small,
Inside English 1010 Faculty Advisor
Director of First Year Writing
Assistant Professor of English
University of Wyoming
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How to Use Inside English 1010:

An Introduction for Students and Instructors

Inside English 1010 showcases work in the three main genres taught in English 1010: the Expos Essay, the Researched Argument, and the Opposite Editorial. The essays included in this journal were written by University of Wyoming students in the academic year preceding publication, and were recommended by instructors who feel that this work represents some of the best their students produced.

Reading this introduction, you are probably enrolled in English 1010, and likely haven't written in some—or even all—of these genres before. *Inside English 1010* is a resource designed for you; these essays will clarify evaluation criteria for the three major assignments and will model rhetorical strategies that you will learn and practice in your own writing this semester.

As you read the Expos Essays, pay particular attention to the writers' use of summary, paraphrase, and direct quotation. Can you follow the arguments of the articles being summarized? How do the writers indicate which points are most important? How do visuals and layouts contribute productively to the essays?

What topics have writers chosen for their Researched Arguments, and how have these topics been narrowed into specific arguments? What kind of evidence do the writers use to support their claims, and how do these claims build towards their theses? How are paragraphs organized? What make the introductions and conclusions effective?

How do the writers incorporate personal experience and pathos into their Opposite Editorials, and what other types of evidence do they use? How is the writing style of the Op-Eds different from the Researched Arguments'? How do the writers target a particular audience in each essay?

Examining strong work in each of these genres will help you recognize what is and isn't effective in your own writing, and why. Use these essays as model and inspiration for your own writing, and know that there is not simply one way to write an extraordinary essay; *Inside English 1010* offers excellent examples of the different ways English 1010 students have been successful in communicating their interests and ideas.

Once you've revised your essays for the final portfolio, send your best work as Word documents to insideenglish1010@ gmail.com to be considered for publication in the next issue of *Inside English 1010*.

The editorial board of *Inside English 1010* wishes you a semester filled with interesting reading, engaged discussion, and good writing. Work hard, have fun, and write on!

Table of Contents

Expos

Photo by Thomas Park

The Knowledge Gap in Raching

By Will Goudey

As time progresses, the impact of distinct generations on the global and nationwide economic markets grows and fades away respectively. The article "Collegiate Millennials' Perceptions of Locally Produced Beef," by Shelby Oesterreicher, Lisa Lundy, Joy Rumble, and Ricky Telg explores millennial college students' knowledge and opinions about the beef industry. In their article, the authors provide results from a study done with Florida Cattle Ranchers, LLC at the University of Florida in an effort to gain market research. The millennial generation is the leading consumer of beef, and the increasing consumer interest in purchasing "local agricultural products has correlated with the number of state departments of agriculture and branding programs participating in the promotion of locally grown food" (Oesterreicher et al. 1). In a time where information is readily available via the internet and television, the beef industry has shown its stagnation in interacting with its customers. The inherent lack of effective communication from the agricultural industry has broadened the divergence between consumers and producers.

The Growing Economic Impact of Millennials

A majority of millennials are now employed adults, some with families of their own. As millennials' role in society increases, producers must make decisions that cater to their purchasing tendencies and preferences. A study conducted by The Beef Checkoff in 2015 found that "millennials associate eating beef with certain emotions including anticipation, excitement, satisfaction, comfort, and nostalgia" (Oesterreicher et al. 3). Consumers are buying more locally produced food, which benefits things such as the environment and local economy. The livelihoods of beef producers depend on the purchasing patterns of the industry's consumers.

In their publication, Oesterreicher et al. note that there were no studies to produce data correlating to the local beef industry in Florida until this study was published (3). The article expresses the importance for all agricultural producers, not just those residing in Florida, to improve market research and develop meaningful educational works and advertisements to facilitate positive consumer tendencies.

Writer's Bio

Will Goudey, 20, is from Burke, Virginia, which is approximately 20 miles from Washington, D.C. He is in his freshman year at the University of Wyoming studying political science. Will is aspiring to attend law school and become a licensed attorney. Outside of the classroom, Will is an avid fan of the Boston Red Sox and the New England Patriots, and enjoys spending time with his friends and family.

Participants' Perceptions

In order to gain the qualitative data necessary for improving consumer relations, the study utilized different surveying methods to create a diverse data set. The primary method used was focus groups, which utilized opinionated conversation and debate in small groups to gain an understanding of the participants' perspectives (4). In this particular study, the groups consisted of undergraduate students at the University of Florida, representing a diverse set of ethnic backgrounds and majors (6). The interview protocol called for the focus groups to be asked about their "personal experience with beef and the Florida beef industry." Following that, the groups were shown communication materials and asked to jot down their thoughts on the pieces (Oesterreicher et al. 4). The categories which the participants were surveyed included: cattle production; the use of natural resources; management practices; the treatment of animals; food safety; and the marketing of the beef industry in Florida (Oesterreicher et al. 7-8).

The two main themes that arose following the interviews were health implications and transparency. The participants expressed concerns and negative implications toward "corporate farming" and noted that the size of the ranching operation correlates to how the animals are treated (Oesterreicher et al. 7). The authors noted that the topic of the quality of the food and medicine the cows received was concerning to the participants as well (8).

The amount of water used to produce beef was mentioned; however, none of the students could provide an accurate quantity. As college students, the participants noted that since many of them must stick to a budget, the quality of meat they buy was not as important as the quantity of meals they may get out of their purchase (11). As one participant said, "I think, usually, the more labels beef has [no hormones, grass-fed] the more expensive it is" (Oesterreicher et al. 8).

The authors noted in the article that the participants had little to no knowledge of the beef industry in Florida specifically (5). Communication materials from the Florida beef industry was shown to participants and the surveyors recorded their reactions and insights. A promotional video, social media profiles, and a website were of note. The participants were underwhelmed and unimpressed by the video, stating that it was "too perfect," was "perpetuating stereotypes," and it was "very forced" (Oesterreicher et al. 9-10). As well, the participants expressed a desire to see specific ways in which the cows are handled, managed, and treated. Transparency was insufficient in the material, exacerbating the issue of a lack of consumer knowledge.

Local Beef Prices vs. Large-scale Operations' Prices

As evidenced from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Report to Congress on Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems, it is much more costly for producers of local beef products to run their businesses. Processing and retailer margins are two areas in particular in which local producers take a financial hit, as there are a declining number of small-scale cattle processing plants. (Low et al. 23)

Important Characteristics of Grass-fed Beef

According to a study done in 2003, the three main things people consider when buying grass vs. grain-fed beef are price; fat & calories; and omega-3 fatty acids. (McCluskey et al. 4) Grass-fed beef is a healthier, although more expensive option. As with locally produced beef, grass-fed beef's superior taste and benefits to the industry come at a higher price for the consumer.

Means of Improvement

Skepticism was a major byproduct of the material shown to the millennial participants. In order to reach and resonate with a larger number of millennials, who are going to be the most influential consumers in a short period of time, the beef industry must modernize their communication efforts (Oesterreicher et al. 3). To keep up with the times, it was suggested that ranchers take to social media and grassroots marketing to achieve their goals of increasing sales. To make a true impact on their industry, ranchers and advocates alike must bridge the knowledge gap with their consumers. Producing social media content and blogs highlighting the major aspects of the industry such as the difference between breeds; how and what the cows are fed; medical care for the animals; and the pasture to shelf process will give consumers a visual aid and ease their concerns. It was also implied by the authors that the institutions should improve their logos; offer tours of ranches; and perhaps produce a documentary to show the market the life of a rancher, with all of its struggles and triumphs (11). Modernizing communications would only be of benefit to the ranchers. As noted in the article: "According to Petty and Cacioppo (1986), the more an individual feels connected to an issue the more likely they will be to process the issue-relevant arguments within the information presented" (Oesterreicher et al. 11). Florida Cattle Ranchers, LLC could benefit from maintaining consistency with their online presence, showcasing diversity and the role of women on the ranch. Engaging millennials will be a primary factor in the success of the industry, as that generation's means of purchasing beef products is only increasing as time goes on. It is in the best interests of ranchers across the country to modernize their marketing and consumer relations as their livelihoods depend on such an alteration.

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Photo by Kyle Mackie

Making a "Moo"-ve on the Millennial Meat Market

by Adison Linder

From images of cowboys on the range, to vignettes of burgers sizzling on the grill, the beef industry permeates American culture in part because of the food's extraordinary abundance in the United States. In 2017 alone, 54.3 pounds of beef were available per American (Kantor and Blazejczyk). With so much produced each year, finding a consumer group for the product is essential to the industry's ongoing success. "Collegiate Millennials' Perceptions of Locally Produced Beef," by Shelby Oesterreicher, Lisa K. Lundy, Joy N. Rumble, and Ricky W. Telg, explores what millennials—considered the future's largest and most influential market for beef products—think of the industry. The study focused on a small group of millennial students at the University of Florida, who were asked to discuss their opinions of the beef industry as a whole and their perceptions of the local Florida beef industry and its advertising. Due to the importance of millennials as an emerging consumer group, understanding their beliefs regarding beef and its production is vital for people in the industry, especially those involved in local agriculture, in order to advertise and sell their products to this new generation.

Writer's Bio
Adison Linder

Adison Linder is a student from LHS. Originally from Texas, she's lived al across the west, and is planning on staying in the region for college. In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing, drawing, and taking her dog on walks

What Do We Know About Millennials and Beef?

Oesterreicher et al. begin by laying out previous research done on millennials' complex relationship with the beef industry. Born between 1982 and 2004, millennials are described as having grown up with unprecedented access to technology and data but without sufficient ability to process, understand, and communicate (Oesterreicher et al. 2). Their constantly evolving environment, filled with media that is interacted with but not fully understood, plays an important role in shaping how the group interprets information. This is seen when examining what millennials think they know about the beef industry. The article purports that a divide between consumers and the beef industry exists because of disseminated misinformation or a lack of knowledge, and then explains that a person's investment in their preconceived notions influence whether they can be persuaded to believe something different (Oesterreicher et al. 1-2). Essentially, while the authors believe people are ignorant about the beef industry and its inner workings, producers looking to sell beef to millennials will find that negative perceptions can be changed with relative ease or difficulty depending on the level of commitment millennials have to their preexisting notions.

Beef marketers may find this phenomenon a blessing or a curse due to millennials' predominantly unenthusiastic views of the industry. In one study, "forty-four percent of the participants associated the entire [beef] production process with 'factory farming' (The Beef Checkoff, 2014, p. 8)," with "millennials [associating] 'factory farming' with inhumane treatment of animals and negative perceptions… [and expressing] high levels of suspicion, worry, and uncertainty…" (Oesterreicher et al. 3). This data might concern higher-ups in beef production, leaving them wondering if millennials will even buy beef due to the prevalence of negative sentiment about its production. However, the generation seems to have less of an issue with the product itself. In general, millennials eat beef frequently enough to be considered the largest consumer group, link the food to positive feelings, and care more about cost, ease of preparation, taste, and nutrition than the processing the beef goes through (Oesterreicher et al. 3). The conflict between millennials' support of beef and their distaste for the industry that manufactures it demonstrates the generation's complicated relationship with the food. Due to their importance to the beef industry as future customers, understanding the preferences and perceptions of millennials is crucial for producers in order to learn how to effectively market and sell more beef products.

Taking Stock of the Research

Key Terms

Convenience Sampling: The most readily available subjects are used in a study rather than subjects that might represent the whole population.

Purposive Sampling: "...Carefully [selecting] subjects based on study purpose with the expectation that each participant will provide unique and rich information of value to the study."

Source: Suen, Lee-Jen Wu, et al. "Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling."

Recently, a shift in Americans' attitude towards different types of meats has begun to occur. Local beef products increasingly appeal to consumers—partly due to the rise in support from state-funded programs (Oesterreicher et al. 1). This shift in preference has implications for the future of the beef industry, especially when gearing products toward a millennial audience. However, while previous research demonstrates millennials' biases and preconceptions regarding beef, no studies have been done on specifically local beef products and Florida millennials (Oesterreicher et al. 3). Enter beef industry start-up Florida Cattle Ranchers, LLC. Because their local products began to be stocked in certain grocery stores in their home state, the Florida-based organization wanted to learn about Florida millennials' thoughts on beef and the beef industry in order to better cater to them with their advertising (Oesterreicher et al. 2). To accomplish their goal, the organization partnered with researchers to conduct a study to better understand the mindset of one of their largest consumer bases. The study observed millennials' opinions on the "characteristics and features" of beef and the national industry, the Florida industry specifically, and different types of marketing by utilizing "convenience" and "purposive" sampling—looking at the responses of 18 students from the University of Florida after they were broken up into small groups for a facilitated discussion, asked questions, and shown various forms of advertisements from Florida Cattle Ranchers, LLC. (Oesterreicher et al. 4-5). In doing so, the researchers found some common themes.

For example, the students were particularly troubled by the impact of the beef industry on natural resources, animal welfare, and health. Osterreicher et al claim that, "each group expressed their concern for the effect cattle ranching is having on the environment [particularly]… 'climate change,' 'global warming,' and the 'methane' production of cattle... Participants in all three groups brought up concerns for the quantity of water used to produce beef products" (Oesterreicher et al. 7). The millennials also showed preferences towards local products. According to the authors, "local" farming had more benevolent undertones, especially in regard to animal welfare than "corporate" farming, which the groups associated with a disconnect between workers, animals, and managers (Oesterreicher et al. 7). This reinforces the validity of the aforementioned trends towards "local" beef production and skepticism regarding the beef industry. However, the students' opinions regarding animal welfare were fairly ambivalent. Compared to other more negative perceptions, the millennials thought that beef cattle were treated "fairly well," if "less than ideal," though they had concerns about "'pesticides,' 'hormones,' and 'antibiotics'" (Oesterreicher et al. 8). Interestingly, the opinions expressed lie in direct contrast to previous studies where millennials equated the beef industry with animal cruelty. One major factor that influences millennials' decisions regarding purchasing beef products are potential health risks from either food-borne illness or chemicals present in the beef (Oesterreicher et al. 8). This concern affected everything from how they ordered steaks at restaurants to whether they bought raw or prepackaged meat. Each of these worries demonstrate how millennials' apprehensions mainly stem from how the beef industry affects the world around it.

Another major consideration that millennials consider when purchasing beef is the cost. The students in the study agreed that they all pay attention to the cost of the beef they're buying, usually to identify the lowest price and that in general beef will be sold at a higher price the more labels—such as "grass fed" or "locally sourced"— it has (Oesterreicher et al. 8-9). The authors hold that millennials prioritize price over origin, which may be due to a lack of information about the local beef industry. "When asked specifically about the Florida beef industry and Florida beef, participants continuously reverted to referencing the national industry and exhibited minimal to no knowledge of the state industry... The participants had almost no experience with the Florida beef product and only a small number had actually purchased 'local' beef products" (Oesterreicher et al. 9). This creates questions about the esteem the students hold "local" farming in due to their lack of knowledge of the Florida beef industry compared to national beef production. Overall, the study suggests that millennials generally hold negative perceptions of the beef industry and its processes, which presents difficulties for agricultural communicators looking to market products to the demographic.

Grabbing a Marketing Opportunity by the Horns

Oesterreicher et al. conclude by summarizing the millennials' reaction to the advertisements from the Florida Cattle Ranchers, LLC, and advise beef producers and sales representatives on the best strategies to market products to the demographic. After the discussions, the facilitators showed the students various advertisements created by the Florida-based company. These included "a promotional video, a website, two social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram), the FCR logo and label, a recipe card, a blog post, and a rack card," finding that students trust materials like the website over the video due to a highest perceived "transparency" and a less "scripted" feel (Oesterreicher et al. 9). Clear information garnered a more favorable response among the millennials, while appeals to emotion were seen as deceitful and unrepresentative of reality. Transparency was one of the recurring themes in the discussion, along with the ability of the promotional material to personally connect with the students. The researchers claim that, "According to Petty and Cacioppo (1986), the more an individual feels connected to an issue the more likely they will be to process the issue-relevant arguments within the information presented. In order for the participants to process the video or other material, they needed to feel some sort of connection to it" (Oesterreicher et al. 11). As such, the students were unimpressed with the video due to the fact that "they did not see people that looked like them" and disliked its saccharine portrayal of ranching life. This suggests that for optimal success, future marketers should attempt to include more diversity and more insight into meat production to appeal to millennials.

The authors close with suggestions for agricultural communicators based on the study. These include educating the public on how the beef industry works in order to “bridge the knowledge gap” between consumers and producers, using social media as a more effective way to market beef products, and producing more “transparent” and endearing advertisements through showing more of the day-to-day lives of ranchers and the processes behind beef production (Oesterreicher et al. 11-12). All of these allow salespeople to appeal specifically to the millennial generation, though the results might be skewed due to only Florida students being present in the sample. The authors then recap the results of the study, reiterating that millennials know little about the beef industry, and what they do know often comes from biased sources, so communication is key to marketing to their demographic in order to get rid of the prevalent negative perceptions (Oesterreicher et al. 12). Through their insights into the mindsets of the millennial generation, Oesterreicher et al. aid all levels—national and local—of the beef industry in retaining their place of prominence in American culture despite the emergence of a new, unprecedented consumer group.

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Researched Argument

About the Author

Evan Kallas is a University of Wyoming student pursuing a BA in Philosophy. Born in Cheyenne, he is a seasoned self-taught musician who's been a part of more than a dozen projects and groups. He has self-promoted concerts and been a part of the independent music community in south-eastern Wyoming and northern Colorado for over a decade.

Digital Music Streaming Services Owe Independent Artists More Royalties

Evan Kallas

Digital music as a commodity first came to the forefront in the early 2000's and exploded in popularity largely in part to the introduction of portable media players such as MP3 players and the iPod. At the base price of 99 cents a song on platforms such as iTunes, artists had to sell just shy of 1,900 digital units to make a monthly minimum wage in the U.S. of $7.25, which is, for many independent artists, tenable (U.S. Department of Labor). This continued to be the model until streaming services such as Spotify and Apple Music came onto the scene and began to dominate the industry and, in turn, shifted the entire model of the digital music economy. Once these services became the dominating way to consume digital music, they completely changed the very definition of digital music as a commodity. As Lee Marshall points out, Spotify and other streaming services are not selling the recorded music they provide, but they are selling a subscription (Marshall 156). This makes clear that, for these services, "the nature of what is being sold is qualitatively different" (Marshall 181). Streaming services are providing an experience, not music (Marshall 156). Previously, artists could make money off digital song and album sales in terms of units in the capitalist market, but now their recorded music has been "decommodified" and is part of a multibillion-dollar corporation's subscription conglomerate. Changing the very nature of the industry and digital music as a commodity has unnecessarily left artists behind and omitted them from their fair share of royalties. Digital music streaming services have an obligation to pay their artists that populate their platforms their fair share of royalties to continue to stimulate the recorded music economy, community and cultivate motivation for musicians to continue to create recorded work.

Services such as Spotify use their resources to pay larger artists while leaving independent artists largely out of the equation. According to Tim Ingham, writing for *Rolling Stone*, Spotify pays artists on a “pro-rata basis” and uses a pool of subscription money to pay artists. All artists get shares from the same pool in accordance with the number of streams they produced in a month. Since all the payouts come from the same finite pool of royalty money, artists who are globally recognized and have tens of millions of streams each month get most of that pool, while smaller artists get much less. Ingham claims that 43,000 artists are in this “top tier” royalty share in the Spotify platform. These artists generate $22,395 per quarter, more the six times what a minimum wage worker makes in the same time frame. This means they are obviously enjoying their lion’s share of income from these services (Ingham). Smaller artists, however, generate an amount that is drastically lower. Ingham again states that the lower tier of artists with their music available one Spotify generated on average just $36 dollars in a quarter. With these numbers it is clear that making a living from these services is not at all tenable for independent artists. This seems like it can be a fair model, since top tier artists on Spotify have the most streams, but these artists only make up 43,000 of the service’s total artists. There are nearly three million artists that are currently operating outside of Spotify’s top tier. This shows that Spotify only concerns itself with artists with top streaming numbers, not the enormous community that gives the streaming service the bulk of its life, its lower tier, and independent artists.

This business model of relying on users to create the platform and the resignation of owning any assets can be compared directly to that of the gig economy. Ride share apps such as Uber similarly exploit their workers by taking advantage of their economic position in the platform to evade responsibility for their workers. These workers, like the independent artists discussed above, deserve their fair share of wages because they provide the life force of the service. In the case of Uber, as Austin Zwick points out, there is no "long-term social contract between companies and employees" (679). Companies have circumvented the actual hiring of workers by considering all their workers merely contractors and not employees (Zwick 679). The people driving for Uber do not actually work for the company, but themselves. In turn they are given no benefits and no other rights that workers actually employed by their companies enjoy. Spotify's business model is similar: their workers are the independent artists. The main comparison of these two corporations is the following: Uber and Spotify do not have a platform without their workers. The companies own no assets, do not protect their workers/artists and do not contribute to any large incentive for these people to continue participating in their business model besides meager monetary payments. However, Uber drivers can make a modest living off participating in the service, an average of $25.00 an hour, while lower tier Spotify artists can make next to nothing from the platform. While Spotify arguably exploits their artists in a more extreme manner, the fact of the matter is the same for both services: Uber and Spotify both similarly take advantage of the very thing that keeps their services legitimate and alive, the worker. These people contributing to these platforms should be adequately compensated due to them being the basis on which these businesses function.

Due to these factors negatively impacting the financial well-being of artists at the hands of streaming services, the working musician has turned to a tried-and-true method to generate income: live performances and touring. Concert tours have long been an excellent way for musicians to make a living off their work, and for a large portion of them it can be their main source of income. This lifestyle can be taxing for musicians in terms of being away from their home, family, and friends for sometimes half of a year, but due to dwindling physical album sales and the domination of streaming services, it is one of the only tenable ways to make a living as an independent musician. In 2020, this was made no longer possible due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Musicians have lost their one source of decent wages. The musicians in Wild Ponies lament their losses in an interview for Billboard: “We immediately had to cancel 38 U.S. dates. ... And we’ve lost an entire U.K. and European tour. For us, that’s pretty much all of our income” (Associated Press). Since the beginning of the indefinite hiatus of live music, according to Ingham, artists have turned to alternative ways to make ends meet, such as crowdfunding campaigns, merchandise and even asking for donations online. Musicians losing their sole source of income for nearly a whole year with no end in site has forced them to resort to other methods of obtaining it. This exposes Spotify and other streaming services’ underbelly of exploitation of these artists even more. Artists are losing their livelihoods during the Covid-19 pandemic and streaming services are continuing to accumulate capital on the backs of these people. If live music does not return within the next year, many of these artists will be destitute, no longer be able to do what they love and will be forced to get different working-class jobs. If Spotify and other companies would pay these artists their fair share of royalties instead of deflecting their responsibility then these people, robbed of their main source of income, could continue to do what they love and continue to create music for their fans across the globe.

Alternatives to the exploitative streaming business model do exist, and they have set an example of how a company that truly cares about artists should look like, and the way they should conduct business. Websites such as SoundCloud and Bandcamp are representative of this alternative model that could be adopted by streaming services. As David Hesmondhalgh et. Al point out in their article, “SoundCloud and Bandcamp as Alternative Music Platforms, these services have been “significant as channels for musicians to reach audiences in the new musical ecosystem” (2). By providing a way for consumers to interact with and directly support artists, these tools have been invaluable to the independent musician. On Bandcamp, fans can purchase digital music as well as physical merchandise directly from their favorite artists. Bandcamp takes a small fee in the transactions, “ten to fifteen percent”, recordings are kept on individual pages and are available throughout the years as a form of archive and wealth of independent music anyone can access (Hesmondalgh et. al 8). SoundCloud, is a more community-based platform, offering an interconnection between artists and fans in the vein of social media platforms. This fosters “user interaction”, and encourages artists to post their tracks as well as share other artists tracks they enjoy (Hesmondalgh et. al). While Bandcamp focuses on full albums, SoundCloud is more of a single track based platform. In their differences, the key aspect that these two services share are their focus as a platform for independent artists to share and sell their work. If Spotify and others could adopt a similar model for independent artists, such as “an alternative system of payment that directly distributes an individual’s subscription to only those artists to which the individual had actually listened” (Marshall 185), then they would hold a higher ethical standpoint and end their current exploitative model that negatively impacts independent artists.

With these different factors and alternatives in place, there is no reason for streaming services to not consider their duty to independent artists. Some artists and labels adamantly abstain from using these services, but unless their work is doomed to fade into obscurity, they must use them. It is necessary for these companies to consider the working musician essential to their platform’s legitimacy, livelihood, and eclecticism. Spotify takes advantage of independent artists and if it is to be an ethical and inclusive service, it must adopt more artists-oriented practices. If Spotify and others adopted a more generous payment system to independent artists, it would cultivate a new motivation for artists to upload music to their service, thus bolstering the service’ ubiquity amongst consumers and artists alike. Spotify should not solely care about the consumer experience of the platform, but also consider the experience and well being of the independent artists that populate it.

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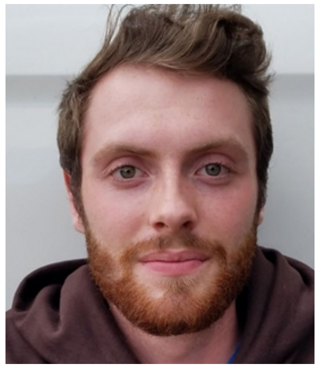

About the Author

Quinn Kwiatkowski was born and raised in Arvada, Colorado. He is currently a freshman at the University of Wyoming, majoring in Construction Management. When he is not studying, he enjoys a variety of hobbies ranging from hiking and traveling to working on cars and snow-boarding. Quinn does not consider the statement “if it is not broken, do not fix it” to be true, and prefers to pursue ways to improve the not broken, but faulty items in his day-to-day life. These items range from larger things such as the entire American public transportation system, to the smaller things, like fixing an annoying rattle in his car.

What Would It Take to Improve the United States' Public Transporartion?

Quinn Kwiatkowski

The mass production of automobiles in the early 1900s led to a change in the very fabric of American society. People could travel with a level of comfort, cheapness, and independence which had never been seen before. Assembly lines of Model Ts helped create the middle class, allowing families to move out of the cities and still find employment, while creating a path of connection to even the most remote areas in the country. Cars remain a symbol of freedom to Americans and the ability to go anywhere at any time is incredibly enticing. Yet as the American population grows and buys more cars it is becoming increasingly clear that cars are harmful for not only Americans, but also for the environment. Fortunately, there are options to solve this problem in the form of public transportation. These solutions are often ones which are already well known and available in most areas, but at the same time are not utilized to their true potential. An effective and appropriate public transportation system in America would not only benefit the citizens utilizing them but would also positively impact the environment and economy as well.

Understanding what makes American public transportation less efficient than it should be is the first step. One problem present is there is little push to improve the current public transportation system. Several arguments can be made against any meaningful improvement, but one common argument is that America is just too big and spread out for an effective public transportation to work. What this argument fails to recognize is that other countries have had to deal with this problem and solved it. Canada, for example, is a large country that also relies on the automobile. However, Canada went about developing infrastructure much differently. Journalist Joseph Stromberg says that comparing Canadian cities with similar sizes and economies to American ones, such as Portland to Vancouver, or Salt Lake to Edmonton, or Des Moines to Winnipeg gives us an insight to how big the difference really is (Stromberg). He found that in "[e]ach case the Canadian city has two to five times as much transit service per capita, so there's correspondingly more ridership per capita" (Stromberg). These cities also have a higher mutual cooperation between a wide range of authorities and providers, both public and private, which transfers to a seamless method of getting from one place to another, similar to that of taking a personal vehicle (Bąk 28). This statistic leads to the conclusion that at some point there was a divergence in priorities for the two countries, and it is important to establish what that change was.

In the 1960s, countries like Canada, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, and the United States were all trying to decide how to incorporate the car into their everyday life. European countries focused mainly on keeping and improving the transportation that already existed; anything from trains to bus routes. Countries that did not already have public transportation invested early on, like Canada with their light rail lines and efficient bus routes. However, during this same time period, the United States was removing pre-existing public transportation lines like streetcar tracks and building highways to make room for the automobile (Stromberg). With America's primary focus on the car, public transportation became an afterthought. Once the car replaced the streetcar in bigger cities like Los Angeles and New York, bus routes were established in these same areas as a welfare service for people who could not afford a car (Stromberg). Further, as Avishai Ceder discuses in "New Urban Public Transportation Systems: Initiatives, Effectiveness, and Challenges" unlike other countries which placed a heavy emphasis on creating a usable system that is profitable, reduces congestion, and provides access to all incomes, America developed large suburbs that were constructed with cul-de-sacs and winding roads that make it tricky for buses to navigate (Ceder 59). Another disadvantage to this construction style, as opposed to a grid system commonly seen in European cities, is that it is often much more strenuous to walk places, forcing people to take cars.

Considering that the American transportation system was built around individual transportation, it is no wonder why it becomes more ineffective as the population increases. Still, solutions to congestion problems present themselves in other countries. China's public transportation initially lacked the capacity to carry passengers around with maximum efficiency. Monika Bąk discusses the solution to this problem in her article "Types of Solutions Improving Passenger Transport Interconnectivity". China built the Maglev, a high-speed train that was much faster, quieter, and smoother than traditional trains (Bąk 29). Although this system can carry 7,000 passengers a day, it cost so much money to build that it will never make a profit for the government. The United States systems have historically operated at a profit due to enforcement of fairs (Ceder 60). It's reasonable to assume, then, that a train similar to the one in China, if set up properly, could be enough to cover construction and maintenance costs. But, in spite of that financial loss, there are benefits to the Chinese economy, such as the creation of jobs, reducing the financial burden of owning a vehicle, less pollution, and decreasing the amount of wear and tear on other infrastructure. The idea that public transportation is bigger than a price tag and paycheck is not one which has been widely accepted in America and is becoming more of a hindrance for Americans.

Another, less expensive, solution is the Edinburgh tram system in Scotland. This solution to combating road congestion is interesting as it is a route that America could have taken with streetcars and trolleys in the 1960s. The reason that Americans removed streetcars from cities was because "once just 10 percent or so of people were driving, the tracks were so crowded that [the streetcars] weren't making their schedules" (Stromberg). What the Edinburgh system did differently is embed the tracks in the roads but separate them when germane so that the streetcars do not compete with private vehicles and timely schedules can still be made (Bak). This is still an option for America, but it would require the creation of rails and streetcars. This is not cheap and would not simply happen unless the disparaging view of public transportation in the United States changes. Simply adding light rails and streetcars to the current system would be enough to ignite the public's support and desire for a more efficient system that can be expanded.

The reality is that other countries put value and pride into public transportation. Apart from China and Scotland, the same mindset can be seen in Sweden. Magnus Soderberg reports that as of 2006, the Swedish government imposed a bill (Prop. 2005/06:160) which has the main goals of meeting the transportation needs of the public, promoting regional development, meeting high quality needs, no deaths/serious injuries as a result of traffic, and shall adapt to fit a good living environment where nature is preserved (Soderberg 583). Goals like those in Sweden are easy to implement because the relationship that the citizens have with the public transportation industry is regarded very highly. The difference is that in America "a much greater percentage of US public transit costs are subsidized by public tax dollars" (Stromberg). It's not hard to understand why, then, that Americans would be unlikely to vote for a bill that asks for billions of dollars to build a high-speed rail system, when they are already paying a premium for sub-par services. That said, there are ideas that do not cost exuberant amounts of money and would vastly improve the public's opinion of American public transportation.

The fact that trying to design a high-speed railway or a tram system does not work as a simple build-and-play, but requires money and imagination, is an easy way for America to get started is to streamline current interchanges between buses, subways, and trains. It not only benefits the riders, but also the image of public transportation in America. In one of her articles, Emily Badger discusses this issue in detail, but says that "for all its transit service, the Bay Area — like a lot of big metropolitan areas — doesn't knit together all of its providers in any coherent way" (Badger). However, the cooperation of different public transport systems is something that has also been solved in China with the maglev because riders can purchase tickets for the train off of their phone (Bąk 32). This setup is an improvement on efficiency, use of time, and simplifies travel. This problem has also been solved in Salzburg Austria, where the purchase of a single card gives you access to the entire city's public transportation system, from buses to tourist attractions for the day. Although this system is used mainly for tourist's day passes, it would not be unrealistic to adopt a similar system in the United States, for both vacationers and residents.

Understandably this is a big change for a country to make without being 100% sure of the results. The good thing is that there are many countries that have already successfully taken the risks and there is data to back up their accomplishments. The Danish IC/3 is the perfect example of this, where a simple change created an increase in riders, and also an increase in revenue. As Ceder writes, "The number of travelers rose by almost 200% in the first 4 years" (58). This was done by almost doubling the amount of trains per day, going from 6 to 11, and with reducing fares by 10-30% (Ceder 58). The reason this was so successful lies in making public transportation more attractive to riders. In this case, the convenience of riding changed because there were more trains and a reduced cost. Another way to get citizens on board with voting for improvements on these issues is by showing the changes that they are directly contributing to. For example, if it were common knowledge that, "[public transportation] has the best safety record, can relieve some traffic congestion, and can preserve the environment," people would be more willing to utilize these options instead of their cars (Ceder 58). Both these solutions require minimal work and could be very impactful in America. One of Ceder's explanations to why this has not occurred in America is simply because “there is no need to promote [public transportation] in a free market environment” (58). There can be motivation for the investment in proper public transportation, such as tax breaks, or government funding, but with these solutions the responsibility to act falls in the hands of citizens as much as it does in politicians. This circles back to an earlier point of changing the mindset of public transportation from a welfare program to a vital utility. When looking at other countries it becomes clear that in order to get the ball rolling on public transportation improvements, coupling convenience with widespread knowledge of the benefits is the formula for success.

America’s public transportation industry is falling behind, which is causing problems as the population increases. With an efficient public transportation system, there are not only benefits to the citizens, but there are benefits to the economy and environment. Improvements range from simple changes that smooth out our current public transportation to a complete overhaul that focuses on the citizens needs, both currently and in the future. An increase in safety, ease of travel, and an overall increased sense of pride in the United States would be a welcome benefit. The government has a responsibility to care for and provide a better life for its citizens including ensuring safe and efficient travel. There is no excuse for a first world country to be struggling with public transportation, especially when there are so many successful options and working examples in other countries to copy.

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About the Author

Abigail Preston is from Cheyenne, Wy. She is a United States Air Force (USAF) veteran and now serves in the Wyoming Air National Guard (WY ANG). She has returned to the University of Wyoming to study nursing after spending the last five years as a medic in the USAF. Working in the healthcare system in the US is why she is so passionate about educating the public on how these systems work. She hopes this this knowledge inspires others to make changes as they realize there is a better way to provide healthcare.

Abigail plans to finish her degree and return to serve as a flight nurse in the WY ANG. She spends her free time in the wild outdoors of Wyoming where she enjoys hiking, hunting, snow and water sports, and everything else Wyoming has to offer.

US Healthcare Needs Reform

Abigail Preston

The United States' healthcare system has long been under scrutiny, and for good reason. As of 2018, the United States was the only country out of 33 developed nations without a universal healthcare plan (Vladeck, 2003, p.16). The US spends tens of millions more of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on healthcare every year compared to all other developed nations, but that does not mitigate the costs of healthcare to its citizens (Dieleman et.al, 2016). In fact, unforeseen medical costs are one of the top causes of poverty in America. US citizens, per capita, pay $9,403 a year on average for healthcare (Bauchner, & Fontanarosa, 2018, p. 990). In countries with universal healthcare (UHC), $9,403 would pay for almost two healthcare plans (Bauchner, & Fontanarosa, 2018, p. 990). Even more shocking, though, is that the US already has a version of "socialized" or universal healthcare in place. The Medicare, Medicaid, and Veterans Affairs programs are all government funded, but these programs only cover a specific population, with the US spending the same amount on those programs as other countries do on their entire healthcare systems combined (Vox, 2017, 00:35). The number one reason patients in the US with treatable, curable, or potentially fatal medical conditions do not seek care corresponds directly to the cost of healthcare here in the US. The United States healthcare system needs reform because receiving necessary medical care without going bankrupt should be considered a basic human right, and citizens should no longer have to fear financial burdens when it comes to their health.

In comparison to other industrialized countries, the United States' healthcare expenses are astronomically higher. Howard Bauchner and Phil Fontanarosa (2019) note in their article “Healthcare Spending in the United States Compared with 10 Other High-Income Countries: What Uwe Reinhardt Might Have Said” that countries with UHC plans provide healthcare to all of their citizens through a mix of means using government funds, and still spend significantly less than the US which still has an estimated 10% of its population un-insured (p. 990). In his article, “Not “Socialized Medicine” -- An Israeli View of Healthcare Reform,” Dov Chernichovsky (2009) states that in 2007 the US spent 15% of their GDP on healthcare in comparison to Israel who only spent 8% and still provides medical coverage for all its citizens (p. e46(1)). That number has only risen since, as Dieleman et al. (2016) points out in the article “US Spending on Personal Healthcare and Public Health.” Dieleman estimates that in 2014 the GDP spending on healthcare was up to 17% (p. 2628). Meaning that between 2013 and 2014, spending increased 5.3%. The increased spending in the US is consistently higher than all other developed nations, but the US still does not provide any more services, nor does it have better outcomes than other countries. In fact, life expectancy in the US is three years shorter than the average for other developed nations such as Canada, United Kingdom, or Australia (Bauchner & Fontanarosa, 2018, p. 990). The spending in the US on healthcare would suggest better outcomes and significantly higher life expectancies than in other developed nations, but that is not the case.

Most countries with UHC still offer citizens the option to buy supplemental or private insurance, depending on the type of plan the government offers, but the totals spent on private insurance is negligible when compared to the cost of healthcare in those countries as a whole. If public vs private insurance is juxtaposed in the US, about 20% more citizens have private insurance than public or government insurance (Congressional Research Service, 2020). Comparatively, the US spends more than four times as much as other developed countries in the private sector, meaning the US government is spending the same amount of money on government funded healthcare as the public is spending on private healthcare or insurance (Vox, 2017, 00:30). The US's government spending on healthcare goes towards Medicare, Medicaid, and the Veterans Affairs programs. Though I can agree, as a veteran myself, that programs like this are necessary, they could be organized and systematically structured better than they currently are. These programs only cover certain populations, but the total GDP spent on them is comparable to what other countries spend on their entire healthcare plans, and those plans insure the entire nation. That alone should be enough proof that what the US is doing right now is not working.

The reason healthcare in the US is so much more expensive than other industrialized nations comes down to several different reasons centralizing around the fact that the US utilizes a free market for healthcare. This means that each health entity can pick and choose the prices they want to charge. Prices continue to rise because there are no price regulations, and the complexity of the system has caused administrative costs to elevate exponentially. Vox explains in the video, *The Real Reason American Healthcare is so Expensive*, that in most instances, free markets are superior to the US government when it comes to getting things done, but not in the healthcare industry (2017, 00:45). When choosing healthcare coverage, consumers are often not in the best situations to make informed decisions, which when combined with the complex health market, makes it incredibly challenging for citizens to be informed. If the consumer has just been in a major accident, received a new cancer diagnosis, or needs end of life care for example, they now need to decide what kind of care they can afford. In situations like these, there is not enough time or proper help to make an informed and financially acceptable choice. So, a free market without regulation only puts them at risk as they try to decide on care for themselves, a parent, their spouse, or children.

Because the US healthcare market has no government regulation on price, consumers are at a huge disadvantage, especially if they are uninsured. When a consumer has an insurance policy, that agency, whether it is public or private, negotiates prices on your behalf, but in the US, there are hundreds of insurance companies negotiating all different prices for different aspects of healthcare. This makes it difficult to make a truly informed decision on health insurance especially with all the intricacies that surround the market. Bauchner and Fontanarosa (2018) explore what Uwe Ernst Reinhardt, a political economy professor at Princeton University and well known in healthcare, would have said if he were still alive in regard to a report done on US healthcare compared to ten other high-income countries. Reinhardt would have emphasized healthcare price transparency strongly because the secrecy of price is what has enabled healthcare cost in the US to rise so quickly and consistently every year (2018, p. 991). Healthcare prices are negotiated in the private sectors to increase profit, but it only hurts the consumer. Reinhardt noted that when consumers try to educate themselves on healthcare costs, it becomes incredibly challenging because, “Rare are the physicians, hospitals, imaging centers, or other clinicians or healthcare centers who post on their websites the prices for frequently performed procedures” (Bauchner & Fontanarosa, 2018, p. 991). Because of this lack of transparency in the industry, pharmaceutical companies and hospitals determine what to charge, which becomes an issue when a procedure that costs $5,000 dollars at one facility could cost $10,000 at another. Since consumers have little information to educate themselves about what prices should be, they are forced to pay whatever their insurance companies mandate, or if they are without insurance, top dollar prices. Many times, in countries with UHC in place, it is the government that sets max prices on all the procedures and pharmaceuticals; and, because the government is insuring everyone, they hold the power to say no to excessive prices. This transparency in UHC plans creates an opportunity for the consumer to have some peace of mind.

Another major factor which makes US healthcare so expensive is administrative costs. On the subject of insurance company spending, Reinhardt noted in a comment before his death that for every premium dollar spent by insurers, 79.7 cents went to actual healthcare, 2.7 cents were profit, but the last 17.8 cents were used to cover operating cost (Bauchner, & Fontanarosa, 2018, p. 991). These include marketing, determining eligibility, utilization control, claims processing, and negotiating fees with every physician, hospital, healthcare worker, and facility. These operating costs encompass the administrative work that needs to be done but are twice as high compared to countries with less complex healthcare systems (Bauchner, & Fontanarosa, 2018, p. 991). While 17.8 cents may seem like a minimal amount, when it's compared to countries utilizing UHC the impact becomes clearer. Because the US free market healthcare has so many different options for insurance, and each insurance option has different administrative process in place, it has created a market so complex it takes whole teams to decipher billing and paperwork for each and every different option, explaining why it encompasses almost 20% of the bill. It was estimated in 2019 that consumers and providers in the US spent 496 billion on these billing and insurance-related costs alone (Gee & Spiro, 2019, p. 1). In the US, these administrative fees account for 8% of the GDP spending on healthcare, while in most other developed countries healthcare administrative cost only account for 1-5% (Bauchner, & Fontanarosa, 2018, p. 991). If the US were to utilize UHC, those costs could be significantly reduced and would take a large burden off the GDP that is currently being spent.

Arguments against UHC frequently cite the potential negative effects it could have on the economy. The fear is that enacting a UHC-type system will destroy the US economy beyond recognition. Those fears are not only coming from political sides of the argument, but some individuals throughout the healthcare systems as well. This is because healthcare professionals being paid less, taxes increasing, and money used for healthcare taking funds from other government programs are all possible outcomes (Vox, 2017). The fear of lost profits are enough to sway some from even considering a type of universal health coverage.

It is unfortunate that these opinions play such a huge part in healthcare and are difficult to pin on any one specific group. Profits gained from how the system is currently have made greedy politicians and healthcare professionals from seeing the greater good. Those who are afraid of what healthcare reform could do to their bottom line are responsible for why healthcare in the US has spent decades in a constant state of limbo. When President Obama enacted the Affordable Care Act (ACA), it was the first significant change to healthcare the US had seen in over fifty years (Obama, 2016, p. 525). The ACA allowed those unable to qualify for insurance to finally qualify, and lowered costs for low incomes families. These changes were estimated to prevent 87,000 deaths over four years (Obama, 2016, p. 528). Yet even though the ACA made so many good changes to the healthcare system, there was still an incredible amount of push back from those parties who fear that changing the system would ultimately lead to economic failure, stating healthcare change would take rights away from the American people and money out of their pockets.

The arguments against UHC involving economics fall flat when other nations around the world with UHC can be seen thriving without economic hardship directly related to healthcare reform. What politicians and those who are against change seem to not understand is that UHC is not an all or nothing type system. Changes do not happen overnight. It is a slow and methodical process towards a better way to do healthcare, and while some of those changes seems daunting, they must be considered for the greater good. Small changes add up to huge benefits. Dr. Moffit (2007) suggests in his article, “What is the Best Way to Reform the U.S. Healthcare system? A Universal Healthcare Tax Credit is the Solution,” that we do not need some type of radical change to begin to make a difference within the system, just good economic discipline (Moffit, 2007). Understanding that healthcare reform is for the good of the nation as a whole is the first step to unloading a burden this nation has been carrying for decades.

US Healthcare Needs Reform

Healthcare in the US is broken, and for too long it has been ignored. We need to find solutions to the high prices and issues with access to affordable coverage. America has long been considered the greatest nation in the world, but slowly we are losing sight of what made us great in the first place. Other nations are passing by as they realize the importance of affordable healthcare. It is imperative, in order for the US to continue to be an undeniably strong democratic power in the world, to understand the need to have access to affordable healthcare. The right to healthcare should be something citizens never fear being without. Healthcare reform is not an overnight process. It will take time, understanding, and the willingness to change a broken system. Healthcare reform begins with a nation's people being unwilling to sit stagnant and watch the world go by. The United States healthcare system needs reform because receiving necessary medical care without going bankrupt should be considered a basic human right and citizens should no longer have to fear financial burdens when it comes to their health.

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Op Ed

Photo by Gábor Adonyi

Reviving the Art of Sewing

Merisa Collins

Today I walked into Quilt Essentials, located in Historic Downtown Laramie. Despite being more than 350 miles away from where I grew up, I felt right at home. Fabric stores are becoming fewer and farther between, but they all seem to have a few vital things in common. They are operated by friendly people who are eager to help and stocked with a bright, beautiful collection of fabrics. Unfortunately, stores like these are in danger because of a dwindling interest in sewing. Sewing has a plethora of applications and can be very useful, and community members can support these stores by sewing.

In the last several decades, sewing skills have become a hobby rather than a necessity. This has led to many people not knowing how to sew. The British Heart's Foundation did a survey in 2017 that found "nearly six in ten people revealed that they are unable to sew confidently or at all." Low clothing prices have made home sewing slowly dwindle away. Many people that do sew have very limited skills. In fact, "23% . . . can't even sew on a button properly." The good news is that over half of those who answered the poll said they would be interested in learning sewing skills. Although the art of sewing has been dying, it may be able to make a comeback.

Even though sewing was becoming a lost art, "the COVID-19 pandemic has changed everything." The surge of demand for face masks brought many people back to their sewing machines. Many people who are employed in the crafting market have seen a huge increase in interest and have been very busy. Gloria Horn, a sewing store owner, said that at one point during the pandemic, all her sewing machines that cost under $3,000 were back ordered. To stop this art from going back into a recession, people must continue sewing as a hobby.

Some people worry that sewing is very expensive, and if you buy all new materials then it can be. However, when sewers are creative in finding their materials, they can get them at a very low cost. For example, I made a queen-size quilt using all new materials for $150. When I made a queen-size quilt out of my T-shirts and fabric scraps, I only spent $20. Sewing can be very cheap. In fact, many people make money doing it. When I was in high school it was well known that I had sewing skills. Teachers would often ask me to make alterations to their clothing. I made some money through this and I was able to gain experience.

Sewing is a creative and productive hobby. It can lower anxiety and bring people together. It used to be an essential skill that family members would teach to their children and is still a great opportunity to connect with others by discussing projects and techniques. And, as seen during the pandemic, it can be a very useful skill in emergency situations. This useful skill provided face masks for medical personnel and citizens. Many people learned how to sew masks on machines or by hand.

These basic sewing skills can break newcomers into the amazing world of sewing. While sewing is very important for mask making, it has many other uses as well. Sewers can make alterations, sew new clothes, make clothes last longer, and make a variety of fabric-based products. Sewing is a great hobby; it is enjoyable and can have a positive influence in the world.

Store bought clothes have lots of room for improvement and sewing can improve them! These clothes are supposed to fit most everyone, so they are designed in a way that does not fit anyone properly. They are designed for someone who is cut from a cookie cutter. This just does not work because everyone is unique. Having clothes that better fit an individual helps raise their self-esteem. Sewing your own clothes, or at least being able to alter them will prevent people from having to wear ill-fitting clothing.

Sewing can help fight the impacts of fast fashion. The fast fashion industry makes tons of cheap clothes based off current fashion trends. These clothes are poor quality and do not last very long. Many clothing items are not used to their full potential. Sewing can give clothes new life.

Upcycling is a popular way to design and repurpose clothes. To upcycle clothing means to take an old garment and turn it into something new. One example is taking an old shirt and making it into a stylish skirt. Upcycling is different for everyone. It can give people their own unique look and is less expensive than buying new clothes. Many sewers get their 'before' clothes from thrift stores and save money that way. Upcycling can be as big as transforming a whole outfit, or as small as patching the hole in a pair of jeans. Fixing holes or broken seams can extend the life of clothes. Sewing can help stop fast fashion and save people money.

Paying for alterations is expensive! Most people choose to buy something new rather than fixing their old clothes. Many alterations are minimal and if people had the skills to fix their own clothing, they could save a lot of money. Developing these skills can take time, but if new sewers start small, they can build up their confidence. If you are not comfortable fixing your own clothing yet, you can support the sewing community by having your clothes fixed professionally.

Sewing can also be used for small projects. Clothes can be repurposed as a new item. Clothes are often used to make pencil bags, purses, duffle bags, headbands, or anything else made of fabric. My personal favorite is making clothes into quilts. Things like T-shirts, jeans and old sheets are great for quilting! They are also easy to come by and add personality to the quilt. Quilting is also great for using up small pieces of fabric.

People who are interested in picking up this hobby should start small. A small project like a hair scrunchie or pillowcase is a good way to learn the basics. New sewers can learn from a friend or family member. It is a great way to spend time together. They could also set up an appointment to learn at a nearby fabric store. If these resources are not available there are many YouTube videos that are helpful for learning the basics.

Sewing is an amazing skill to have. It was very useful in the early days of the pandemic and it will continue to be useful. It is an enjoyable hobby that has many great benefits. It is creative, productive, and a good way to save money. Sewing is also a good stress reliever. It fights the fast fashion industry and improves the fit of clothing. Sewing with your friends and family is a great way to become closer. You can introduce others to sewing and help revive the art. By learning to sew, people can receive all these benefits and support the crafting community.

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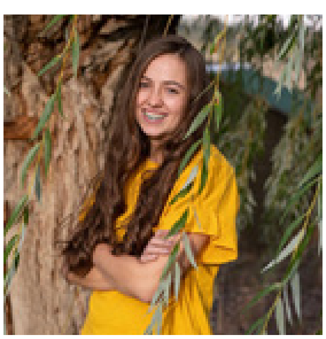


About the Author

Merisa Collins is a freshman at the University of Wyoming. She is majoring in Chemical Engineering. She is from Lovell, Wyoming. Merisa is an avid sewer and loves to go to fabric stores, make quilts, learn new sewing techniques and donate her projects.

Photo by Eva Blue

Coloradans Will Once Again Cry Wolf

Sadie McMullen

The wolf is one of America's most fierce and well known predators roaming the Rocky Mountains. Their beauty and powerful presence strikes fear and curiosity into people all around the world. Wolves have been eradicated in Colorado for decades, but they will once again roam Colorado in the next few years. But, as a livestock owner, I think that wolves should stay out of Colorado.

The one Rocky Mountain state which does not currently have a constant wolf population is Colorado. There are hundreds of packs of wolves in the other Rocky Mountain states ranging from Canada down to Mexico. There have been debates for decades over the reintroduction of wolves in Colorado, but a new petition put on the 2020 ballot now states that wolves will be reintroduced in just a few years. Many people believe that this reintroduction will benefit the ecosystem, while others think that wolves are dangerous and should stay out of Colorado.

A History of Wolves in Colorado

There are currently no wolves roaming in Colorado, but they use to run wild across the state. They quickly became a threat to livestock and people, and the residents of Colorado took matters into their own hands. According to Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the last of the gray wolves in Colorado were killed around 1940. However, since then, the wolf populations in several states surrounding Colorado have made a remarkable comeback. Their repopulation has been called "One of the greatest comebacks for an animal in the U.S. conservation history." Currently, there's an estimated 1,700 wolves living in the western states.

Why Wolves Are Important

Wolves play a key role in the maintenance and balance of the mountain ecosystems. In 1872, the United States began to protect the wolves in Yellowstone National park, and through this protection, biologists recognized the imbalance of an ecosystem without wolves. With less wolves to kill large game animals such as deer and elk, these grazers continued to feed on more plants leading to the erosion of the ground and reducing the bird population. Wolves' impact on the environment allows for more vegetation to grow, which provides more habitats for other animals. So, wolves help increase the diversity of an ecosystem.

Wolves would have a positive impact on the big game animals in Colorado by helping keep the populations of these animals healthy. Wolves tend to prey on the weakest members of the herd and eliminating the weakest members of the herd helps with the overall health and strength of these game animals.

Wolves may also be a solution to the illness, Chronic Wasting Disease, a virus that is contagious between members of a herd. Sick animals spread the disease to others before the sickness prevents it from being able to keep up with the herd. Eliminating the sick members slows the spread of this disease, causing wolves to have a positive impact on the health of these herds.

The Cons of Reintroduction

While there are several positive impacts that wolves would have on Colorado, there are also some very negative impacts. Hunters and small towns would be negatively affected by the wolves' presence. In order to hunt big game in Colorado, hunters have to travel to remote areas of Colorado and small towns rely on the revenue that hunters bring. If wolves are killing more big game animals, such as elk, there will not be as many elk left for the hunters. Fewer hunters would come, and therefore less money would be available to these small towns. Hunters would have to find other states to hunt big game animals.

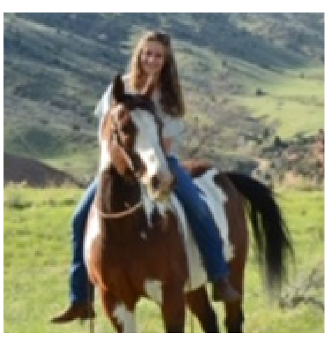
As well, wolves are well known for their detrimental impacts on livestock. As a livestock owner, I have seen livestock deaths from mountain lions, bears, and packs of coyotes. Adding wolves to this list of predators is not something that I want. In 2015, wolves were responsible for hundreds of livestock deaths across the five states where they roam. These victims included cattle, sheep, horses, and dogs. It is almost impossible to protect livestock from wolves. Once a wolf tastes the blood of livestock, it will not stop hunting them. People have to kill that wolf in order to save their livestock.

Since it has been such a controversial topic in Colorado, the decision to reintroduce wolves was put on the Colorado 2020 voting ballot to let the residents decide. If there were enough votes, state biologists would have to release wolves across Colorado's open space by 2023. The votes decided that wolves are coming back. The problem with this voting system is the location of the voters. Nearly three quarters of Colorado voters live in areas where wolves will not affect them. Those who will be affected by their presence had proportionally almost no say in the matter. Another concern is the interaction between humans and wolves. While wolf attacks on humans are rare, they still happen. Coloradans love to be outside but having wolves in the area may make people think twice. As predatory animals, their instincts tell them to chase anything that is moving fast. This includes joggers, skiers, hikers, and campers. Children are also susceptible to a wolf attack because of their small size.

Wolves do tend to be afraid of people, but they can become accustomed to human presence and remain unpredictable. Other Colorado predators have shown that they are comfortable approaching humans and wandering down into urban areas to find food. Coloradans will have to learn to protect themselves against wolves.

Wrapping it Up

Wolves are one of the most powerful predators and effective hunters to roam the West. Living amongst wolves once again will be something that Coloradans will have to do in a few years. Wolves do have a positive impact on ecosystems and big game animals, but they also do cause damage to livestock populations and they have a negative impact on humans. Coloradans should know what to do during a wolf encounter and how to ensure that both parties can walk away from such an event. I believe that wolves will have a big impact on Colorado, and for better or for worse, Coloradans will be able to adapt to this change.



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Sadie McMullen is from Morrison, Colorado. During her free time she loves riding her horse, showing livestock in 4-H, spending time outdoors, and running track for the University of Wyoming. She is studying Kinesiogy.

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