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Writing 117: Writing for the Social Sciences

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### A Monstrous Journey into the Depths of Premedicine

The journey to deciding on and selecting premedical students as my subjects was surprisingly straightforward. I wanted to move out of my comfort zone, but dentists and doctors as two groups that I know I carry some negative stereotypes of. Then, I went to a club fair in early February, grabbed as many club fliers as I could, and emailed requests. Surprisingly there were almost ten such active organizations on campus, but most were dead ends. After almost a week of cold shoulder and dead-ends, one club, the American Medical Student Association, kindly (but reluctantly) welcomed me to their general and executive meetings.

I ended up collecting my data on these larval state doctors in a very topsy-turvy manner, partially due to extenuating circumstances and partially due to time conflicts with a class the slightly overlapped with the tail-end of AMSA's meetings. I first collected 1 month and a half worth of field notes, dated for each Wednesday. I then, with the permission of the professor, observed more premedical students outside of AMSA through a certain upper division biology class. I then collected two anonymized interviews with two members of AMSA, the first who shall be referred to as Anonymous FirstSubject, and the second as Anonymous SecondSubject. I then collected two artifacts from the club, and hunted for a few more on the /r/premed subreddit. Finally, I collected articles to fill in my gaps of knowledge, and used those articles for my literature review. To be blunt, the stress level and the pressure I could detect from my in person observations were alarming, but the hunt for data on Reddit and the literature review solidified my views. Without a doubt, the medical school application cycle is a viscous monster. It eats innocent, wide eyed students, and leaves the carcasses of their dreams at the remains.

## Works Cited

American Medical Student Association, Merced Chapter. "AMSA Store: Club T-Shirts and Pins!" *University of California, Merced* (12 May 2019). [Web](#).

**Annotation:** Showcasing their low key flair and earning MORE money from their members, AMSA both charges their members fees, and the t-shirts aren't included. On the flip side, the t-shirts are nice, with official logos and art from their parent org.

Anaya, Guadalupe. "Correlates of Performance on the MCAT: An Examination of the Influence of College Environments and Experiences on Student Learning". *Advances in Health Sciences Education* 6.3 (2001): pp. 179–191. [Web](#).

**Annotation:** Anaya performed statistical analysis to see if there was any correlation between MCAT scores and success in Medical Schools. She found, even when controlling for socioeconomic backgrounds, race, and gender, that the perceived rigor of the incoming student's undergraduate school and MCAT scores were the most influential factors for predicting success in Medical School.

Arum, Richard and Josipa Roska. "A Lack Of Rigor Leaves Students 'Adrift' In College". *National Public Radio* (9 Feb. 2011): pp. 1–14. [Web](#).

**Annotation:** Arum and Roska surveyed tens of thousands of first year and fourth year American college students to measure if college improves writing and critical thinking skills. Arum and Roska found alarming trends that the majority of incoming freshman were not prepared by high school, and that a majority of American undergraduate students leave 'adrift,' that is without purpose or reason for their education.

Cooper, Melanie M. "The New MCAT: An Incentive for Reform or a Lost Opportunity?" *Journal of Chemical Education* 90.7 (2013): pp. 820–822. [Web](#).

**Annotation:** Cooper argues that the new 2015 revisions to the MCAT call for a system wide overhaul of how introductory and organic chemistry are taught. Cooper argues against following the Medical College Admissions Test learning guidelines, stating that instead the MCAT encourages a broken, mishmashed view of chemistry. Cooper ends on the note that the current curricula fails to instill pattern

recognition of chemical structures and resultant behaviors, but that catering to the new MCAT's criteria will not fix this problem.

doctorH. "the New 2015 MCAT??" *Collegeconfidential.com* (13 July 2014). [Web](#).

**Annotation:** doctorH, a college freshman at the time, begins a debate on how they should proceed with the new 2015, MCAT format.

Doering, Alex, et al. "The Undergraduate Hospice Experience: A Way to Teach Pre-Med Students the Importance of Compassionate Patient Care (S725)". *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* 49.2 (2015): pp. 420. [Web](#).

**Annotation:** Doering studied and observed the learning experiences of premedical students who worked in hospices, which are end-of-life facilities. Doering noted an incredible growth in both introspection and the ability to empathetically give patient care in these students.

FirstSubject, Anonymous. "An Interview on their Ending Premedical Path with Edgar Tejada". *University of California, Merced* (9 Apr. 2019). Print.

**Annotation:** FirstSubject, a graduating premed on their way to a certain medical school, and Tejada discussed the motivations, obstacles, moral questions, and pitfalls premed students face.

Horowitz, Gail. "It's Not Always Just About the Grade: Exploring the Achievement Goal Orientations of Pre-Med Students". *The Journal of Experimental Education* 78.2 (2010): pp. 215–245. [Web](#).

**Annotation:** Horowitz studied and surveyed several hundred Premedical students at an all male, Jewish college. Horowitz found that while some premedical students were primarily motivated by getting high grades, these students were a minority. A plurality of students were motivated in-part or entirely by a desire to master their classes so as to become better doctors.

Olsen, Lauren D. "'It's on the MCAT for a Reason': Premedical Students and the Perceived Utility of Sociology". *Teaching Sociology* 44.2 (2016): pp. 72–83. [Web](#).

**Annotation:** Olsen argues for the continued importance of Sociology classes and the humanities component of the new, 2015 MCAT. Olsen argues that if doctors are trained with only science and

reductionist biochemistry, they will be unable to introspect on their societal roles, or worse, be unable to treat their patients with human dignity.

SecondSubject, Anonymous. “An Interview on their Beginning Premedical Path with Edgar Tejada”. *University of California, Merced* (1 May 2019). Print.

**Annotation:** SecondSubject, a freshman premed on their way to their sophomore year, and Tejada discussed the motivations, obstacles, moral questions, and pitfalls premedstudents face in the early years, as well as the cause of the high rates of dropout.

Spencer, Andy, et al. “Cheating At Medical School”. *BMJ: British Medical Journal* 322.7281 (2001): pp. 296–299. [Web](#).

**Annotation:** The British Medical Journal’s team of editors exposes the rampant cheating in and before medical school, and debates the ramifications and solutions to the underlying problems.

Tejada, Edgar. *Beyond the Scope*. 20 May 2019. [Web](#).

**Annotation:** Tejada extended his observation into the belly of a certain upper division biology class, with permission from the professor. Tejada took notes on the behavior of premed students in the thick of academic rigor, but did not interact with them.

—. *Tales from the Depths of Premedicine!* 20 May 2019. [Web](#).

**Annotation:** Tejada observed and interacted with premedical students in their natural habitat, weekly AMSA meetings on Wednesday nights. Tejada noted conflicts regarding academic honest in a certain upper division biology class, but also recorded amazing insight into the arduous path to doctorhood.

u/twinkle1996. “App cycle is not fun at all”. *Reddit* (12 May 2019). [Web](#).

**Annotation:** u/twinkle1996 laments on their troubles during this application cycles by comparing themselves to thrown away, discarded Tellytubbie toy.

u/UdnomyaR. “A big shout-out to reapplicants who’ve been improving their applications after getting rejected”. *Reddit* (22 Apr. 2019). [Web](#).

**Annotation:** u/UdnomyaR applauds all reapplicants who went through and the medical school application cycle more than one via potent and ‘dank’ spongebob memes.