

CHANGE IN HIGH-RISK BEHAVIORS DURING THE FIRST COLLEGE YEAR
CATEGORIZED BY GENDER, FIRST-GENERATION STATUS, AND ADMISSION
INDEX DEMOGRAPHICS AS MEASURED BY THE CIRP AND YFCY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study was to evaluate change in five high-risk behaviors among three demographic groups of first-year college students. The study utilized the CIRP and YFCY surveys to gain pre- and post-measurements of behavior for smoking cigarettes, drinking beer, drinking wine or liquor, feeling depressed, and feeling overwhelmed. This quantitative study measured the change in high-risk behaviors in one cohort of students at a moderately selective Midwestern, four-year public, Masters I University using previously collected, archival data.

The independent variables were gender, first-generation status, and admission index. Data were analyzed using the following statistical analysis procedures: descriptive statistic analysis, independent t-tests, multivariate analysis of variance, and discriminant function analysis.

Descriptive statistics were used to determine change in high-risk behavior from the beginning of the fall semester (CIRP) to the end of the first year (YFCY). All high-risk behaviors increased during the first-year of college for all independent variables. Independent t-Tests were utilized to evaluate significances among independent variables. A MANOVA was used to evaluate variance among and between independent variables.

Significant differences were noted for several combinations of independent variables and high-risk behaviors. However, the measures of power and variance indicated low practicability of data. The discriminant analysis predicted membership using cigarette smoking as the high-risk variable.

While the statistical significance was low, important realizations were noted. This research indicates that high-risk behaviors do increase during the first year of college for most students. However, these behaviors were present during the final year of high school. This understanding changes the dialogue of administrators who are charged with designing programs and services to acculturate students to campus life. It is not practical to prevent high-risk behaviors during the first year of college, rather the dialogue consider impacting previously existing behaviors.