

Relations Among Measures of Personality, Assessment, and Risk Taking**Austin Wyman****Publication Date**

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ULRA Application Essay

In July 2021, before the beginning of my junior year, I concluded an independent research project on the relationship between anhedonia and risk-taking behavior. The eight weeks I spent conducting summer research were the best weeks of my Notre Dame experience. In those weeks, I fell in love with psychology research and knew that I wanted to continue exploring other exciting questions in the field. This momentum soon gave rise to my senior honors thesis study: Relations Among Measures of Personality, Assessment, and Risk Taking (RAMPART). Through the use of Hesburgh Library resources, I was able to develop a strong research proposal, receive multiple research grants, and complete data collection for RAMPART, which has been my proudest accomplishment at Notre Dame.

Once my summer research project concluded, I was eager to begin a new one. The conclusion of my previous project had left more questions than answers, and I was determined to pursue some of those questions. I was particularly fueled by one question, which I had encountered frequently in my work as a mental health advocate: why are some people more likely to pursue mental health treatment than others? Understanding the psychological and sociological factors that attract people to therapy would help psychologists and other advocates best encourage people to seek help. The conclusion of my summer project caused me to then reframe this question in the context of risk. If therapy is a risk, are “risk takers” more likely to seek help? Through Hesburgh Library, I gained access to dozens of publication databases, containing high impact journals like *Personality and Individual Differences*, *Assessment*, and the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. After spending a month sorting through articles and becoming familiar with the literature on risk, stigma, and help-seeking attitudes, I was able to draft a literature review with over thirty citations and sufficiently identify a gap in the literature. There

was no previous work on the relationship between risk-taking behavior and help-seeking behavior, so my study had the opportunity to answer a highly important question. RAMPART would have three aims: (a) explore the director relationship between risk taking and seeking help, (b) observe risk taking as a mediator of the relationship between openness and seeking help, and (c) develop a comprehensive model of predicting help-seeking behavior.

As I developed my study's protocol, I continued to use the library's databases to learn about common psychological instruments to measure to my intended constructs (e.g., help-seeking attitudes, stigma, personality, invulnerability, risk taking). However, one instrument was particularly difficult to locate because it was outside of the university's subscribed databases. I searched for the instrument using the library's OneSearch tool and saw it was not available anywhere online, but I did not let this obstacle discourage me. Instead, I initiated an Interlibrary Loan request and was thrilled when the article appeared in my inbox the following afternoon. Using the library's resources, I was able to develop a strong psychological questionnaire, using some of the best assessment tools in the field.

Hesburgh Library was also foundational in the development of my study's methodology. One day, I noticed that the library's Center for Digital Scholarship was offering an educational workshop on text mining. I had never heard of the data analysis technique before because it was not common in psychology, but regardless I attended the workshop because I was interested in learning more. Mr. Eric Morgan, who led the workshop, did a fantastic job of explaining the technique to an absolute beginner, even providing a range of application examples in a diversity of fields. He even offered helpful consultations regarding my own project. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity to learn text mining, allowing me to incorporate this new, interdisciplinary technique in my research.

Although I had almost a year before I was expected to start my thesis, I decided to begin the research proposal and data collection process in my junior fall because I was passionate about my work. Conducting an independent study with three aims and even more statistical methods would take a lot of power and time to analyze. With the scope of RAMPART I intended, I felt I needed to start early as to not disservice the project. Once I received IRB approval in October, I started applying for research grant funding. By December, I earned \$8,500 in grants from the Frazier Thompson Scholarship and the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts. This funding allowed me to collect more than 500 participants using a representative online data collection platform. Months before my first senior honors thesis class, I am proud to say I have collected a complete dataset for my study.

I consider my completion of RAMPART and the opportunities I received as a result to be my greatest accomplishments as an undergraduate at Notre Dame. I owe my research journey to the support and guidance of Hesburgh Library and its massive inventory of resources, which have transformed me into a stronger psychological investigator. Wherever my next exciting project leads me, I will never forget the lessons and experiences that were cultivated in its reading rooms, study rooms, and computer labs. I will always cherish the feeling of victory, emerging through its front doors after having made an incredible discovery. I cannot imagine my Notre Dame experience without research, and I cannot imagine that experience without the library.