

The effect of low-intensity writing interventions on early-career researchers is unknown

- Writers with high self-efficacy outperform writers with low self-efficacy along multiple dimensions related to productivity.
- Writing boot camps and other structured, time-intensive interventions increase self-efficacy.
- The heavy time commitment required by these interventions poses a significant barrier to early-career researchers.

Can a low-intensity intervention increase writing self-efficacy?

We investigated whether a less-time-intensive writing intervention could still produce the increased writing self-efficacy linked to intensive, longer-term interventions.

- Modeled on Shut Up & Write!® (SUAW)
 - Consistent meeting times
 - Experienced facilitator
 - Goal sharing and report-outs
- Virtual via Zoom
- 1 or 2 hours/week for 5 weeks
- Pre/post participation survey adapted from the validated Writer Self-Perception Scale¹

Although Intended for all writers, SUAW is gaining popularity in academia.²

Study Population

Participants were early-career researchers and medical students from underrepresented backgrounds and/or Minority-Serving Institutions.

- 10 were self-selected early-career current and former LEADS scholars
- 13 were medical students in the LEADS/Gleitsman program

87% of LEADS scholars and 79% of Gleitsman scholars are from underrepresented backgrounds. 79% and 77% respectively are women.

A short-term, low-intensity writing intervention significantly increased writing self-efficacy in early-career researchers.

Results

Seven (30%) SUAW participants completed both the pre- and post-survey. Participants (n=7) reported significantly higher self-efficacy on the item “I have a generally positive attitude toward writing” pre-to-post (p=0.047).

The mean of the question “How satisfied were you with this SUAW activity?” which appeared only on the post-survey (n=10) was 1.10 (1=extremely satisfied, 5=extremely dissatisfied).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and t-test results for pre-and post-test self-efficacy items

Item	Pre (n=7)			Post (n=7)			P-value
	Median	Mean	SD	Median	Mean	SD	
Please indicate your agreement with these statements on a scale of completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5).							
I understand the standard features of writing in my field.	4	3.29	0.95	4	4	0.58	0.094
I am confident in my skill as a writer.	4	3.57	0.79	4	3.86	0.9	0.356
I enjoy the process of writing.	3	3.14	1.07	3	3.57	1.13	0.289
I consider writing to be one of my strengths.	3	3.14	1.07	3	3.43	1.27	0.172
I have a generally positive attitude toward writing.	3	3.14	0.9	4	3.86	1.07	0.047*
When I sit down to write, I feel anxious.	3	3.14	0.9	3.5	3.5	1.05	0.809
I feel unable to manage distractions and focus on my writing.	2	3	1.29	3	3.14	2.86	0.788
I procrastinate on my writing.	4	3.71	0.95	4	4	1	0.172

Conclusions

We found that a short-term, less-intensive writing activity increased writing self-efficacy in early-career researchers and medical students from underrepresented backgrounds. Participant satisfaction, moreover, was high.

The fact that we saw improved self-efficacy despite a short duration and low time commitment suggests that our SUAW activity has promise. Departments should consider instituting SUAW as a low-investment way to foster greater writing productivity among early-career researchers.

Key References

¹Henk WA, Bottomley D, Melnick SA. Preliminary validation of the writer self-perception scale. *READING RESEARCH AND INSTRUCTION*. 1996;36:188-200.

²Mewburn I, Osborne L, Caldwell G. Shut up & Write!: Some surprising uses of cafés and crowds in doctoral writing. In: *Writing groups for doctoral education and beyond*. Routledge; 2014:234-248.