



Effectiveness of the STAR Program Year-long Curriculum in Inducing Changes in Career Pathways Towards Tobacco Advocacy and Research

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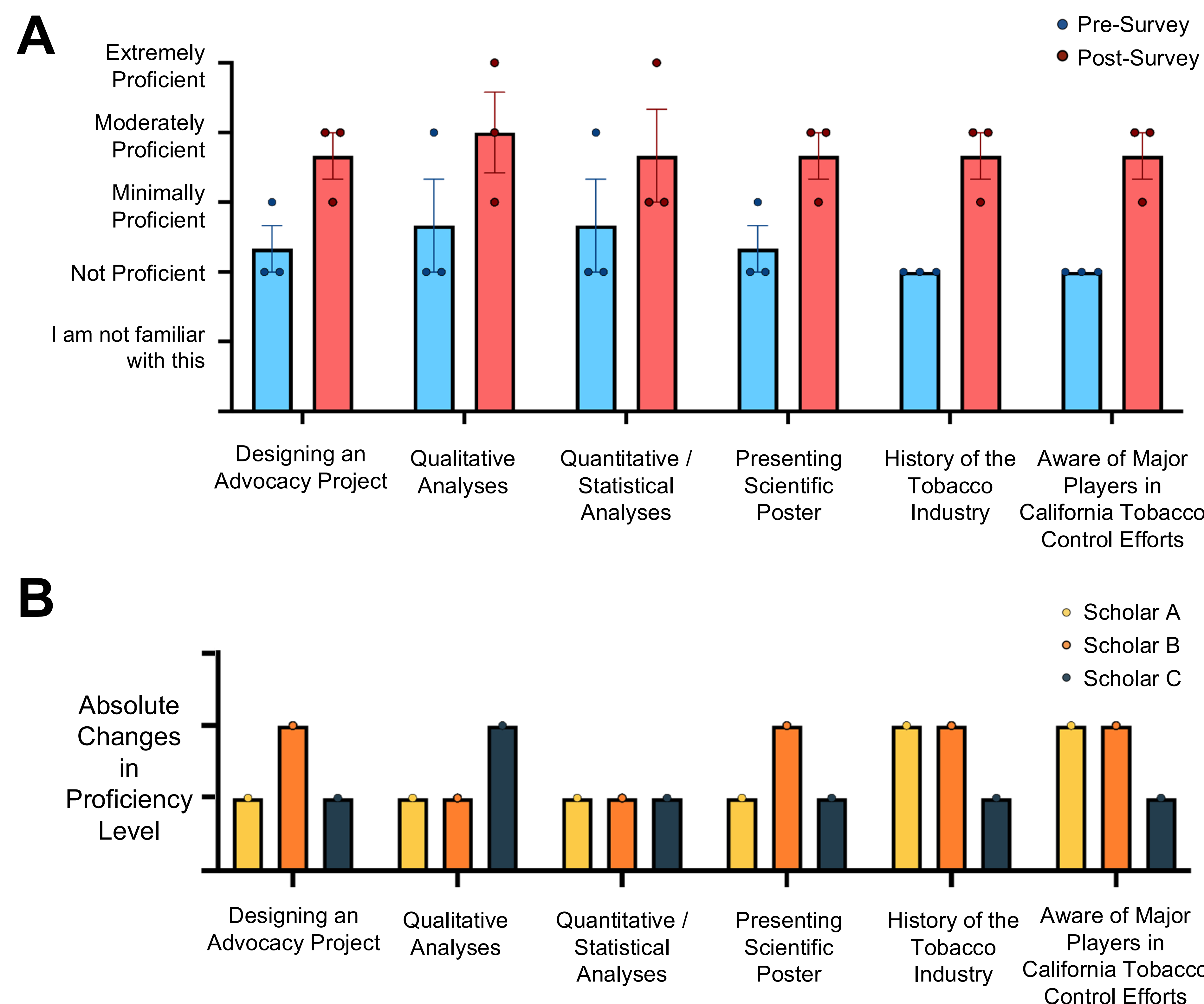
Introduction

Tobacco industry predation, rates of tobacco product usage, secondhand smoke or vape aerosol exposure, and rates of tobacco-related disease disproportionately affect BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and low SES communities worldwide. Increased representation of these groups in tobacco-related research and community advocacy is imperative to create empathetic and inclusive interventions addressing the social determinants of health contributing to these populations increased susceptibility to tobacco use as well as to allow for patient-centered care in resolving tobacco-related health problems. We developed an educational program in Southern California to equip individuals from populations disproportionately affected by tobacco with skills both in research and advocacy to effect positive change in public health from within these communities.

Methods

- The Scholars Tobacco Advocacy and Research (STAR) curriculum was implemented 9/2022 for 3 scholars.
- Nine monthly, half-day discussion sessions were completed, covering topics related to tobacco history, anti-tobacco advocacy, tobacco-related research, and career development.
- Prior to beginning the program, scholars' background and current level of knowledge surrounding tobacco-related research and advocacy was assessed.
- Following completion of the program (5/2023) scholars repeated the survey and self-reported their progress as a result of their participation.
- We evaluated changes in scholar attitudes, expertise, and professional goals.
- A second round of scholars completed an updated curriculum with twice the educational content from 9/2023 - 5/2024.
- Following their final presentations, excerpts of the transcripts were manually reviewed, and relevant quotes related to the effectiveness of the program were identified (scholars are taking the repeat survey now).

Proficiency of STAR Scholars Following Curriculum



Changes in 2023 Scholars' Self-Reported Proficiency Scores on Key Topics Associated with the STAR Curriculum. (A) Grouped Changes in Proficiency Score, and (B) Absolute Changes in Proficiency Level separated by Scholar. All three scholars indicated an increase in their level of proficiency across all key topics.

"The STAR program restored my confidence in myself and faith in humanity by demonstrating the dedication of these professionals to nurturing the growth of inexperienced individuals."

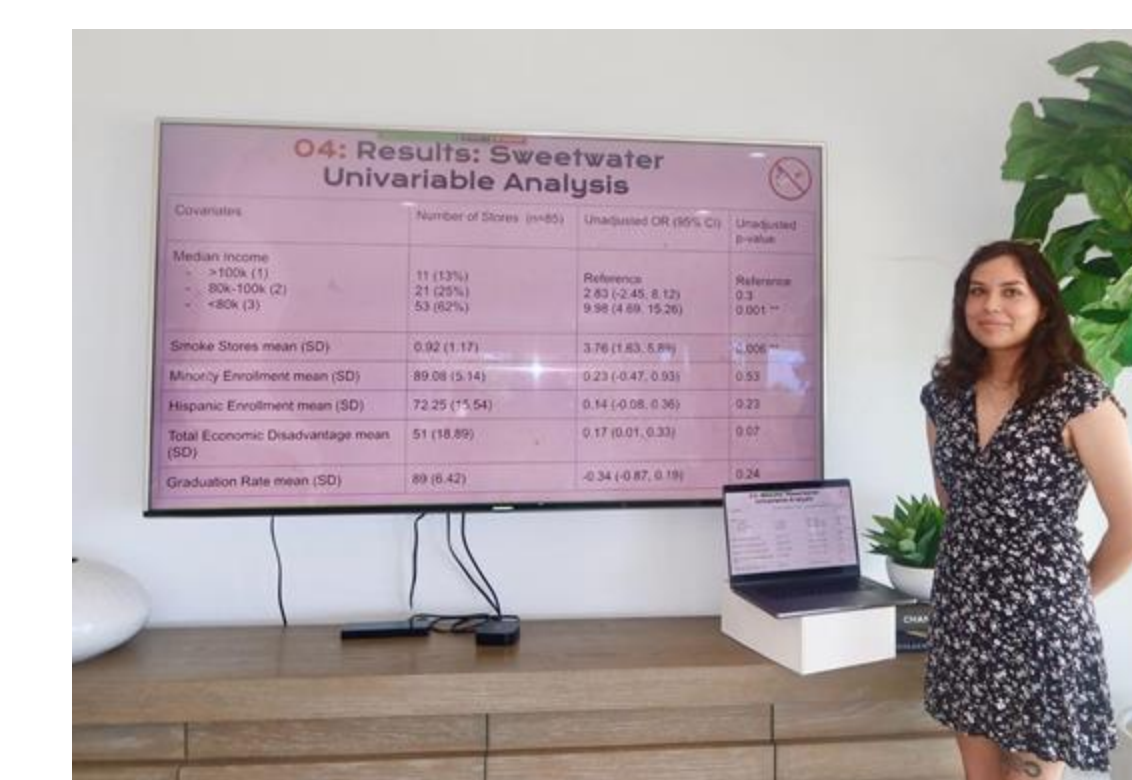
"Following my time in the STAR program, I am inspired to pursue a PhD after completing my MPH."

Direct quotes from the 2024 cohort of scholars embodying the themes of (1) Increase in self-efficacy and (2) Significant shift in life goals.

Conclusion

We share findings from our first and second year outcomes of the STAR program through our novel curriculum designed to educate and train scholars from priority populations to increase representation and diversity of voices in the fields of tobacco-related research and advocacy.

We identified overall positive responses to the curriculum based on self-reported proficiency scores. Further, all seven scholars reported significant shifts in their life goals due to their participation in the program.



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