Peers and Leaders Increase Confidence in Study Group Learning
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Introduction:

Much research has shown that working with fellow students is beneficial to learning, especially to the peer who is teaching or helping the other peers. While it seems that peer learning most benefits the peer who is teaching, there is less research in how the student being taught benefits most. To evaluate the best way study groups should be run, we want to investigate whether learning from a fellow peer in the class versus learning from the study group leader can increase confidence level in the material.

Hypothesis:

We hypothesize that confidence in material will increase in learning both from a peer and a study group leader. However, we believe confidence will increase more when learning from peers. We believe this because discussing the material with other people at the same level allows the students to formulate ideas together whereas learning with a leader may result in more passive learning.

Methods:

Data was collected from 13 college students in the CHM 203 and BIO 198 study groups. During one study group session, half an hour was devoted to working in small groups with other peers while the other half hour was devoted to working as a whole group, led by the study group leader. Surveys were given out at the end of the session and asked the student to identify what topics were peer-taught, what topics were leader-taught, and how confident the student felt in the material before and after the study session in both cases.

Results:

According to these data, peer learning and leader-led learning play an equal role in improving confidence in material. Student self-assessments indicated that both sources of learning significantly improved their confidence in specific material (p = .0007 and p = .0006 for peer learning and leader learning, respectively), as we hypothesized. Unexpectedly, however, there was no significant difference, between the changes in confidence between the sources (p=.45). These findings suggest that both peer exchanges and study group leader interactions are critical to improving confidence in material.

References:


