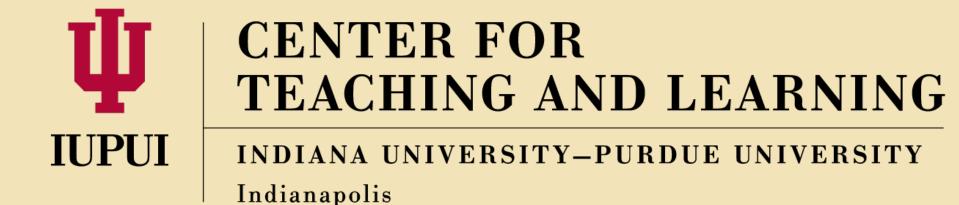# Student Perspectives on Interprofessional Education: Collaboration and Its Challenges

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Research Question

- **How do students understand their role as future professionals?**

- **How do students navigate the collaborative process within IPE?**

Background

- As part of a SOTL evaluation of a newly developed IPE class, this analysis focused on the group evaluations.

Study Participants

- 10 students in Graduate Seminar (Analytic sample, $N = 9$)
  - PH, Law, Policy & Advocacy

- Students divided into 3 interprofessional groups

	MSW	MSW/MPH	JD/MPH	JD
Group 1	2			1
Group 2	2	1	1	
Group 3	2*			1
Total	5*	1	1	2

Note: * 1 MSW not present for content analyzed

Methodology

- Critical discourse analysis
- Convenience sampling
- Individual, written group evaluations: 8 open-ended questions discussing collaborative experience, content and process, over the course of the semester

Analysis

- Guided by Gee's (2011; 2014) Seven Building Tasks
- Emphasis on Identities & Relationships Building Tools
- Each Tool has 6 sub questions that generated nodes
- 29 nodes
  - Relative position (13 combinations)
  - Role (self = 3, other = 4)
  - Characteristics (self = 3, other = 6)
- Identified language / node fit – individually
- Met as a collective to dialogue / refine node assignment
- Synthesized nodes to identify emerging themes

Results

Perspective #1

Professional hegemony exists amongst interprofessional student collaborators

SUBTHEME: Students identified differences between their professional characteristics and those of other profession

"I did not expect that legal students would communicate differently, but we, as a group came to the conclusion that different professions _definitely_ communicate differently." (MSW)

SUBTHEME: That difference manifested in a hierarchical arrangements within teams

"Great to work with students no in law school. Refreshing. However, towards the end especially, it was clear that law student had more tools/training to research & write, at least for projects such as these." (JD)

Perspective #2

Student perceive professional expertise is the most important knowledge

SUBTHEME: What students have to 'give' is their professional substantive/content and what they have to 'gain' is content from other professions

"I was, through this project, able to express my legal knowledge." (JD)

SUBTHEME: Knowledge was not perceived as 'growth in collaborative skills'

"I believe that I was able to learn more on different state laws and policies…" (MSW)

Perspective #3

Effective collaboration is difficult to achieve, so learning collaborative skills needs to be intentional

"I feel we need more…training…in class to demonstrate decision-making styles. My work with my group…allowed me to realize [we] need conflict resolution, competency training—especially focusing on IP teams." (MSW)

"[This IPE class] helped me better appreciate the implications of studying group dynamics and theory and what that means as a group member with that understanding." (MSW/MPH)

Discussion

- Knowledge of student perspectives should inform the format/structure of IPE seminars

- Course structure should first find a means to elicit student's privately held values and perceptions

- Course structure should include learning activities that help students to see the value of different skills

- Outcomes should be understood to be the process of collaboration perhaps more so than the product of collaborations

How IPE is evaluated
- Learning activities and corresponding means of assessments are needed to evaluate collaboration rather than the product of collaboration.

Role of IPEC standards
- IPEC standards provide useful categories of evaluation and goals, but neither say enough about how success is measure nor about how it should be achieved

So what?
- In order to be successful and useful, Interprofessional Education approaches must address the challenges that students encounter when collaborating

- Future research examining interprofessional collaboration at the system level.

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