

Abstract Submission for 2014 Interprofessional Care for the 21st Century:
Redefining Education and Practice
Jefferson Center for Interprofessional Education

**The Influence of Professional Identity Formation on the Attitudes of HealthCare
Professional Students toward Interprofessionalism**

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The objective of this study was to quantify first-year health professional students' attitudes toward their own and other professions following an interprofessional education (IPE) course. Additionally, this study sought to investigate the relationship between strength of professional identity and attitudes toward other professions.

Professional identity, along with the stereotypes that students hold of other professions, are key factors influencing IPE. Expectations are that attitudes towards other professions will improve following participation in an introductory IPE experience. However, theory surrounding professional identity formation suggests this expectation may be premature.

In the Fall of 2011, using a pre/post-test design, researchers administered the Readiness for Interprofessional Learning Scale and the Interdisciplinary Education Perception Scale to 864 first year healthcare students enrolled in an introductory IPE course at the University of Minnesota.

The findings showed a decline in student attitudes toward their own and other professions and a positive correlation between a weakened professional identity and readiness for IPE.

The findings of this study revealed a first-year IPE course did not positively affect student attitudes toward other professions. Additionally, the results suggest strength of professional identity is associated with readiness for interprofessional learning. Analysis of the findings supports the stages of professional identity formation postulated by Bebeau and Monson in an adaptation of Kegan's Constructive-Developmental Theory of Self.

The findings of this study support Kegan's theory of identity development as a framework for understanding the phenomenon of declining attitudes of first-year healthcare professional students toward other professions following an introductory IPE course. Kegan's theory may provide a constructivist-developmental framework for IPE by providing transitional periods of professional identity development for students. This study may also help to inform faculty of the stage of professional identity of their students and to set realistic expectations for introductory IPE.

Learning objectives:

- 1 Explain the developmental stages of professional identity formation.
- 2 Discuss the application of Robert Kegan's theory as a framework to construct progressing phases of interprofessional education.
- 3 Discuss the suggestion that unchanging or declining attitudes toward IPE may be a reflection of natural professional identity development in health care professions students.