

**“In all of our differences we  
are humanly similar”:  
International Service Learning and  
Interprofessional Education in  
Ecuador**

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# Objectives:

- Recognize how qualitative phenomenologic research methods may serve as a tool to understand international service learning (ISL) and interprofessional education (IPE) activities.
- Discover how ISL provides a unique opportunity for health profession students to engage interprofessional teamwork.
- Describe how ISL provided in an interprofessional context can foster relationships and familiarity among students to break down barriers to interprofessional communication, collaboration and teamwork.



# Background

- Limited research exists on combined ISL and IPE activities
  - Bentley et al. 2014, Chipchase et al. 2012, Fries et al. 2013, Pechak et al. 2013, Strong et al. 2014
- STSG began to prioritize IP home visits in 2014 and 2015
- Purpose: describe the shared experience of interprofessional students engaging in ISL



# Context

- Setting
  - Santo Domingo
  - Rapidly growing city
    - Peri-urban, low resource, low income area
- Program
  - Open to all healthcare colleges
  - 23-27 IP students, 20-25 IP faculty
- Course: Interprofessional Teamwork in Global Health



# Methods

- Phenomenological approach
  - “shared experience”
- Recruitment:
  - Emails from Program Coordinator post brigade
  - Low number of respondents (timing)
- Interviews and focus group transcribed verbatim

(Creswell, 2013)

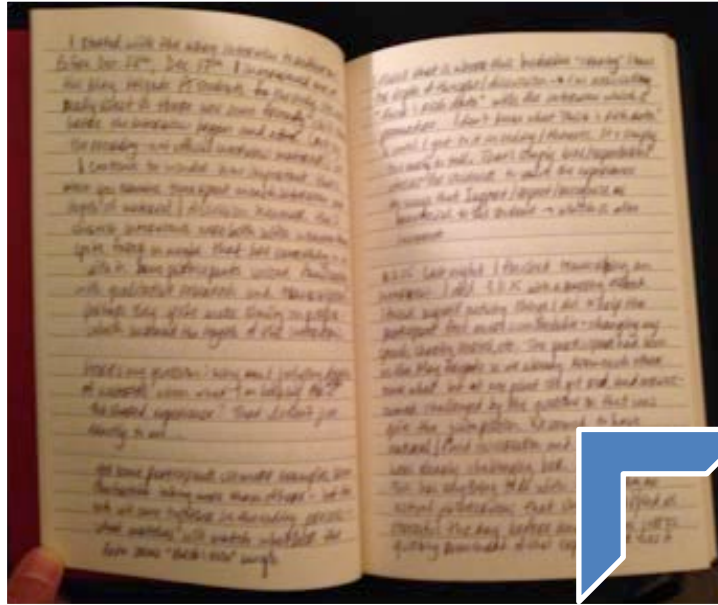


# Methods

Data Source	Description
Interviews	10 individual semi-structured interviews; 1 focus group
Observation with field notes	While students engaged in reflection following an interprofessional home visit, and interprofessional communication and collaboration during clinic participation
Written documents	Reflections written for the interprofessional course or personal journal entries and blog posts



# Methods



Trustworthiness:

Reflective Journal

Triangulation

Peer Review

Member check

## Participants

Profession	Gender	Data Contributed
Medicine	Male	Interview
Medicine	Female	Interview
Pharmacy	Male	Focus group; documents
Nursing	Female	Interview; documents
Nursing	Female	Interview; documents
Nursing	Female	Interview
Nursing	Female	Focus group; documents
Nursing	Female	Focus group
Nursing	Female	Focus group; documents
Physical therapy	Male	Interview; documents
Physical therapy	Male	Interview; documents
Physical therapy	Female	Interview
Physical therapy	Female	Interview
Physical therapy	Female	Interview
Physical therapy	Female	Focus group





# Data Analysis

## 1. Describe your own experience of the phenomenon

- 2 a. Consider each statement with respect to significance for description of the experience
- b. Record all relevant statements
- c. List each nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statement, none as ***meaning units***
- d. Relate and cluster the meaning units into themes
- e. Synthesize the meaning units and themes into a description of the textures of the experience
- f. Reflect on your own textural description. Through imaginative variation, construct a description of the structures of the experience
- g. Construct a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience

(Moustakas, 1994)



# Findings



# In all of our differences...

Textural Subtheme	Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students' cultural expectations were challenged</li></ul>	<p><b>“It was not challenging to feel like you actually connected [with the patient]”</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students experienced personal and professional growth (described IP positively)</li></ul>	<p><b>“America is not the world”</b></p> <p><b>“I didn’t realize what I was capable of”</b></p>
	<p><b>“You really have to figure out what’s important”</b></p> <p><b>“I’m looking forward to joining forces with other members of the team”</b></p>



# Making a difference yet not doing enough

Textural Subtheme	Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students experienced challenges in providing care</li></ul>	<p><b>“Are we really going to be able to help...because the patient has been dealing with the problem for so long”</b></p> <p><b>“It was constant work from 8a-6p and an exhausting day”</b></p> <p><b>“We have to decide the right plan of care based on the services available in the area”</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Patients were thankful</li></ul>	<p><b>“I think they felt they were being cared for and saw that we really wanted to help them”</b></p>



# Demystifying other professions...

Textural Subtheme	Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collaborating with other professionals created opportunities for interprofessional learning</li><li>• Students gained real-world experience negotiating interprofessional differences</li><li>• Students modeled interprofessional skills they learned in class</li></ul>	<p><b>“I think it helped erase a lot of biases I didn’t know I had”</b></p> <p><b>“Capture the good care that other people provide”</b></p> <p><b>“Seeing what they are trying to do really reinforces the idea that we are working together”</b></p> <p><b>“Asking for help can be intimidating”</b></p> <p><b>“It was exemplified by the leaders of our brigade...our goal was to provide patient centered care”</b></p>



# Magnified importance of communication

Textural Subtheme	Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students learned interprofessional communication</li></ul>	<p><b>“It was okay to give your input without feeling like you were going to be discriminated for saying something”</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Language barrier</li></ul>	<p><b>“The interpreters were vital to the collaboration for patients”</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unstructured, informal communication increased familiarity</li></ul>	<p><b>“You work together and then you are together at night”</b></p> <p><b>“We only have each other, we don’t have other friends and family members, so I think that quickens it.”</b></p>



# Conclusions

- Investing in combined ISL and IPE results in positive on healthcare professional students:
  - Supports personal and professional growth
  - Encourages engagement in IP teamwork for a shared goal: patient centered care in low resource setting
  - Professionals as “people first” fosters collaboration



# Conclusions

- Encouragement of social interaction in IPE curriculum
  - Translate to prioritization of team behavior and collaborative practice?
- Future research needs to examine the long term impact of ISL and IPE on clinical practice in the US healthcare delivery system





# Questions?



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