CHAPTER 6

Breaking the Ice

How Students Present Themselves to the Group in an Interprofessional Problem-Based Learning Context

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The first time that students meet for a problem-based learning (PBL) tutorial is important for setting the framework for the rest of the PBL process (Hempel & Jern, 2000). This occasion typically involves introducing themselves, meeting the tutor, writing a group contract, and starting work on the first scenario or case. When students are working in interprofessional groups—with peers from other educational programmes—there is the additional complexity of establishing common ground while maintaining one's own professional focus. It is within this context of interprofessional health education that the current chapter is based. We provide a discursive analysis of the early moments of the first tutorial in which students introduce themselves to their fellow group members. The research question is: How do students present themselves in the first tutorial of a new PBL group in which they come from different professional programmes? In the remainder of the introduction, we situate this work within a broader theoretical and empirical context of work on interprofessional learning and communication, group formation, and academic identities.

INTERPROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

In health care organisations, interdisciplinary or multiprofessional teamwork is becoming a common way to organize services (Blomqvist, 2009;
In medical education, interprofessional learning (IPL) or interprofessional education, in which students work in groups across different medical programmes, is also gaining momentum (Wilhelmsson et al., 2009). IPL has also been combined with PBL (Dahlgren, 2009; Jewell, D’Eon, McKee, Proctor, & Trinder, 2013), since the aims of both approaches are often well aligned. The benefits and challenges of IPL are similar to those of PBL, though there is an additional concern that students should not only learn to become socialised into their own profession but also be able to understand the perspectives of another profession and combine this effectively for the tasks in hand.

A particular challenge noted in the IPL literature is the development of communication practices in teamwork (Thistlethwaite, 2012). Interprofessional communication and collaboration skills are promoted by the World Health Organization as important capabilities that health professionals need to develop during their training in order to facilitate positive patient outcomes and improve safety; IPL is considered an effective approach to accomplishing these objectives (WHO, 2010). The capabilities include being able to communicate effectively and respectfully with colleagues in other professions: to listen, negotiate, manage and resolve conflicts, and explore and respect others’ values (Rogers et al., 2017). In other words, students need to learn not only how to work with other professionals but also how to communicate effectively on specific tasks. In IPL tutorials, students must be aware of and have the skills to navigate a task while also working effectively with other students who have different roles and objectives (Imafuku, Kataoka, Mayahara, Suzuki, & Saiki, 2014). At the same time, economic and organisational factors (e.g., Abu-Rish et al., 2012) or occupational or gendered status hierarchies (Bell, Michalec, & Arenson, 2014) can hinder effective group work in an IPL context.

It has been suggested that some of the communication challenges facing health-care professionals may lie within differences in how newcomers are socialized into the practices of professional work (Braithwaite et al., 2016). Some authors claim that nurses are trained to “view the patient from a holistic perspective, which is complex, systems-oriented and steeped in emotional intelligence, while physicians are trained to value an objective/cognitive approach to patient care which is structured, objective and succinct” (Foronda, MacWilliams, & McArthur, 2016, p. 39). These differences are also seen as entangled within hierarchical power relationships that are likely to impact how interprofessional communication
develops. Similar arguments have been put forward concerning how physicians are trained, claiming that the goal of medical education is to professionalise physicians to function under stress, be task focused, and make the right diagnosis. Physicians may be taught to suppress emotions and block 'natural' responses to what they see and what they must do, particularly during residency (MacArthur, Dailey, & Villagran, 2016). Interprofessional communication training therefore plays an important role in building professional identities for physicians, in terms of how different professions can develop a shared responsibility for health care and mutual trust and respect (MacArthur et al., 2016).

Despite the importance of communication in IPL, there is still very little research that examines how students work in IPL tutorials and how they develop the skills of working interprofessionally. What does it mean to communicate or interact with students from other professions? To answer this we need to examine the literature on group processes, and it is to this that we turn next.

**Group Formation**

Within social psychology, research on small groups—such as tutorial groups—has illustrated the ways in which groups develop and mature over a period of time. For instance, Wheelan’s (2005, 2009) linear progressive theory describes how groups typically progress through five stages, with each stage corresponding to different group dynamics and efficacy: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. In this chapter we focus on the early formation stage of a group’s life (forming), which is characterised by dependency and inclusion. During this stage group members typically orient themselves to each other and the task, striving for security, acceptance, and belonging in the group. The group can also be highly dependent on the leader, and there is a tendency for caution and courtesy among members within communication practices. This early stage of group development is considered to be important for the effectiveness of the group over a longer period of time. It has been argued, for example, that groups will benefit if, during the formation phase, members show interest in each other without being overly friendly, examine experiences present in the group, and discuss the group objectives and tasks (Hempel & Jern, 2000). In early work using the group formation process as a feature of both the process and content of PBL, what was particularly noted was the speed with which students readily distinguish
themselves as “us” when forming a group (Hammar Chiriac, Rosander, & Wiggins, 2018).

In other social psychological work on groups, it has been shown that the tasks on which students are engaged can also influence the interactional dynamics of the group (Hammar Chiriac, 2008). Group dynamics can then be understood as related to the ways in which task management is organised and develops across tutorials. This combination represents a new way of categorising group processes; it provides a better understanding of interactional dynamics in groups and provides greater explanatory value with respect to group processes. Furthermore, Sjøvold’s (2007) work using spin theory has considered interdisciplinary teams in hospitals and the effects that existing professional stereotypes and dominance can have on group performance and the quality of work.

Despite evidence from group research that the formation or early stages of group interaction can be important for the outcomes of group work, there is still minimal guidance on how to manage the first tutorial of a PBL course. While suggestions have been made (e.g., Duch, Groh, & Allen, 2001; Azer, 2005) about how to introduce PBL as a concept to students, there is no known literature on the way in which the interactional dynamics of the first PBL tutorial might be managed. Exceptions include observations of tutorials that have illustrated how the tutor can be a model or scaffold for students’ learning processes and how the students are often highly focused on the tutor in the initial stages (Lycke, 2002). The emerging picture from social psychological research, however, is that the early stages of group development can be crucial to how that group proceeds (Wheelan, 2005). How we start, then, is important for how we continue. In terms of the IPL challenge of learning to communicate with other professions, we need to investigate how those early moments of group work are negotiated interactionally.

**Academic Identities in Interaction**

To summarise, we have noted that one challenge of IPL is to maintain one’s own professional identity while communicating and working with peers from other disciplines. Research into group formation also notes the importance of the early moments of group work for the way in which a group can develop and a tendency in the first instance for there to be more polite conversation and reliance on the tutor to guide the interaction. A final theoretical issue of relevance here is research on how academic
identities are managed interactionally and how students might refer to
temselves as a student or as a particular kind of student when working
with fellow students.

It was noted earlier that one of the outcomes of IPL is for students to
become socialised into a professional practice, to learn the values, roles,
and goals of their profession and their own transition in this process. There
is a transition process from higher education to working life (Abrandt
Dahlgren & Hammar Chiriac, 2009), and regular PBL tutorials can be
a central part of how this process becomes manifest. The literature on
professional identities at times blurs the distinction between identity as
a lived experience or cognitive state and as an interactional or discursive
achievement. Identities can be understood, therefore, as something fairly
fixed or more transient: as an experiential state (e.g., Frost & Regehr, 2013)
or as a discursive framework (e.g., Traynor & Buus, 2016). In this chapter
we use a discursive approach to identities (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006), in
which one's identity is accomplished through discursive practices, such as
talking as a student or being characterised as a student in talk or text. That
is, we focus on the social interaction as a context within which identities are
enacted or produced in talk, without making any claims about cognitive
or experiential states.

The literature on discursive and interactional research has begun to
examine academic identities in particular. Academic identities are defined
as those that foreground educationally relevant concerns (being engaged in
learning activities, having knowledge, attending classes, and so on). These
are the ways in which students “do being a student amongst other stu-
dents” (Attenborough & Stokoe, 2012; Stokoe, Benwell, & Attenborough,
2013). The emergent literature on native-English-speaking students in UK
institutions has shown how, when interacting with their peers, students
often resist or ironise their academic credentials (Stokoe et al., 2013). They
“play down” their achievements, attending to norms against self-praise and
boasting (Pomerantz, 1978). When considered in an interprofessional con-
text, these academic identities might highlight a specific profession (being
a physiotherapist or nurse, for example), since they are not all engaged in
the same education (Adams, Hean, Sturgis, & Macleod, 2006). In this
chapter we refer to “professional identities” as those instances in which
students refer to themselves or their activities in a way that specifies a
particular educational programme. This does not preclude the use of more
generic academic identities, but rather suggests that there is a way in which
identities can be negotiated to differentiate between different kinds of academic identities. Our concern here, therefore, is to examine how students discursively manage their identities—professional or otherwise—in an interprofessional context. How do students present themselves in the first tutorial of a new PBL group when they come from different professional programmes?

METHODS

The data for this chapter are taken from around 50 hours of video-recorded PBL tutorials in an IPL programme in a medical faculty at a Swedish university. Full ethical approval to record the tutorials and use sections of the anonymised data (transcripts and still images) in publications was provided by participants and the local authority. Data are in Swedish and translated into English. This context involves medical and health professional students (from doctor, nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy programmes) in their first year at university working together in groups using PBL for six weeks. In total, four groups of students, each with between 7 and 9 students (30 students in total), were video-recorded during each of their seven group meetings. The students taking part in these tutorials had been studying in their respective programmes for less than six months. Some of them had met in the days before the tutorial, but this was the first time they had met together as a PBL tutorial group with their tutor.

Two or three video cameras were used to record each group in order to capture different angles and the physical orientation of group members, as well as to deal with any technical failures. During the first group meeting, cameras were switched on after the students and tutor had entered the room and returned the consent forms to the researcher, who then left the room to limit intrusion into group processes and to maintain a more naturalistic setting. The collected video data were later transcribed orthographically and translated into English; para- (intonation, pauses, etc.) and extra-linguistic (eye gaze, hand gestures) features were then added to those sections that were analysed in detail (see the Appendix for transcription conventions). The analysis in this chapter is based on data taken from approximately the first 20 minutes of each of the first group meetings. Discursive psychology (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Wiggins, 2017) was
the analytical approach employed, as it enables a focus on how identities are constructed and negotiated discursively (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Discursive psychology theorises psychological issues (such as identities) as primarily socially organised rather than as reflecting mental states or cognitive processes.

ANALYSIS

We consider each of the four PBL groups (labelled A to D) in turn, illustrating how the introductions were structured and how the students presented themselves. While there were differences in how this was managed, what was common across the groups was that each student was asked to say something about himself/herself so that the participants could “get to know” each other as a group. This kind of ice-breaking activity is recommended in PBL guidance (e.g., Duch et al., 2001), but as yet we know of no other research that examines the interactional details of how this process occurs in practice.

Group A

In this group, the tutorial begins with the tutor outlining the activities planned for this meeting (introductions, group contract, the case) and asking the students to write their names on paper to help her remember them. She then initiates the introductions by stating her work role and providing a detailed account of her hobbies. She asks the students if there is anything else that they would like to know about her, and the student seated directly to her left (Jonathan) asks about her favourite food. The tutor then verbally suggests the students continue the introductions, using only minimal eye gaze and head-turning movement to prompt one of the students seated immediately beside her:

Extract 1

1. Tutor: .pt o†kej: (0.4) >ska vi< gå vidare?
   .pt o†kay: (0.4) >shall we< move on?
2. (3.6) ((tutor looks down at notebook, then looks briefly right and left; see Figure 6.1))
3. Jonathan: >ska jag kôra<
   shall I go
4. Tutor: ja [nån (...) tack
   yes [anyone (...) thanks
5. Jonathan: [ah (0.2) “mm” (0.2) ja
   [ah (0.2) “mm” (0.2) yes
6. (0.2) Jo[nathan heter jag
   (0.2) my name’s Jonathan
7. August: [°£hh£°
   [°£hh£°

Despite being one of the more vocal students in the group so far, Jonathan’s first turn in the introductions round is still tentatively achieved. During the long pause (line 2), the tutor looks down at her notes, and some of the students glance down at their own work, though many continue to keep their gaze on the tutor. The tutor then turns her head briefly to the student immediately to her right, and then to her left, with some of the students also following her gaze (see Figure 6.1). While the student on her right does not directly meet her gaze, Jonathan looks up at the tutor as she looks at him. He then utters “shall I go” (line 3) and thus initiates the student introductions. While there is no verbal selection of the next speaker, the eye gaze of the tutor serves as an embodied means through which the student could then take the opportunity to self-select (Lerner, 2003). Since the student on the right of the tutor does not make eye contact at the moment when the tutor looks in her direction, the floor is open to the other student seated immediately on her left instead.

We can also note that Jonathan’s turn is a request for clarification that he is the implied or suggested next speaker. By formulating his turn in this way, he directs it as a question to the tutor rather than as an a priori expectation that he has the right to go next. In terms of the sequence of the interaction, the head turn and eye gaze of the tutor might be seen as

Figure 6.1 Tutor turns head; line 2 in Extract 1.
the first-pair part of selecting a speaker, and Jonathan's turn is then the
second-pair part as the response (Fasel Lauzon & Berger, 2015). The tutor
then simultaneously confirms that he can continue, but not that he was
specifically selected (“yes, someone, thanks”; line 4). The quiet laughter
particle and smiling from August (line 7) also potentially orient to the
ambiguity of Jonathan's first move here and the tutor's reception of this
(“thanks”). While there was no verbal discussion of who should begin the
student introductions, the use of eye gaze enabled the students to pick up
on potential cues for next-speaker selection and in so doing avoid making
the first move themselves (Fasel Lauzon & Berger, 2015; Lerner, 2003). As
also noted in models of group formation (Wheelan, 2005), the students
are visibly focused on the tutor (who in the first PBL tutorial, at least, is
more likely to be regarded as the leader) and look to her to guide the group
discussion.

Following this introduction, the students then proceed in a clockwise
direction to introduce themselves. Many of them pick up on issues raised
by the tutor—the types of exercise they do, the food they enjoy—and for
some of them, their profession is stated alongside the first things they say
about themselves. Extract 2 immediately follows from Extract 1:

Extract 2:
1. Jonathan (0.2) eh:: (. ) pluggar läk första terminen (0.8)
   (0.2) eh:: (. ) studying medicine first semester
2. 19 år gammal (.) eh gillar också att träna
   19 years old (. ) eh also like to exercise

Extract 3:
1. August eh ja (. ) jag heter August och jag är 20 år
   eh yeah (. ) I'm August and I'm 20 years
2. gammal kommer från: eh (. ) från (City) (0.4)
   old, come from eh (. ) from (City) (0.4)
3. eh går också T1 på läk som Jonathan
   eh also in first semester medicine
   like Jonathan

In this instance, the mention of the professional programme is part of a list
of things to say about themselves: their age, where they come from, what
they are doing. In Jonathan's case, it is the first thing mentioned after his
name. As such, it is treated as a relevant piece of information for the rest of the group to know, as a way to situate themselves within the group context. In Extract 2, Jonathan’s “also like” phrase makes an association with the tutor’s expressed interest in exercise and is a way to initiate a commonality that reaches beyond the tutor-student distinction. In Extract 3, August does something similar by making a connection with Jonathan using the same abbreviated “läk” (line 3; short for “läkare,” which translates as doctor or medicine programme in this context) and thus orients to a shared professional identity from the very start.

Not all introductions in this group, however, place the educational program first. In Extract 4 Selma mentions her study programme just as she is finishing off her introduction. Again, we see the management of shared interests (exercise) and the construction of a “doing being normal” identity with hobbies such as exercising and reading:

Extract 4:
1. Selma annars gillar jag att typ träna, (0.4) läsa, otherwise I like to, sort of; exercise (0.4) read
2. (2.0)
3. Selma ah- yeah-
4. (1.0)
5. Selma >sjukköterska programmet med< (. ) än- with the nursing program (. ) but-
6. Jonathan >hhmm< >hhmm<
7. Selma om ni inte visste det if you didn’t know it

Not only is the mention of the nursing programme tagged onto the end of Selma’s introduction, but the way it is formulated (“with the nursing program”; line 5) further reduces the student’s agency. That is to say, one can be “with” a program or “studying for” a profession or be “as” a profession; different ways of formulating the professional program can serve to increase or decrease the sense in which one’s own identity is connected with
the profession. As students at the start of their education in this particular field, it would be difficult to claim that they “are” a nurse, or a physiotherapist, and so on. They have limited rights to be able to make those claims, but how they do present themselves is noticeable within a group in which others come from related but very distinct fields.

To briefly summarise Group A: the tutor began the presentations round with a fairly lengthy and anecdotal account of her own work and hobbies, then used a combination of eye gaze and an open verbal invitation to direct the continuation of the introductions toward the student immediately on her left. The students then presented themselves individually, with most (but not all) referring to their professional identity as one of a list of things to say about themselves, thus highlighting their hobbies as much as their academic affiliation.

GROUP B

Group B demonstrates a similar structural pattern to Group A, in that the tutor begins by telling the group what tasks they will be doing that morning (introductions, group contract, coffee break, then first case). She then says “I can start” and provides a fairly lengthy introduction about her research projects and interests, as well as different jobs that she has had in her career. As the tutor in Group A did, she uses anecdotes or small details about her varied career and interests, some of which the students briefly comment on. As she says “presentations round,” she makes a circular, clockwise movement with her hand (starting with Ludvig, seated immediately to her left; see Figure 6.2).
Once she has completed the hand gesture, the tutor suggests that they also write down their names to help her remember who they are. Another student briefly comments on the interesting things she has done, and then after a brief pause, the move to the student introductions begins at Extract 5:

Extract 5:

1. Tutor ah?
2. (1.0)
3. Tutor kan du [börja (0.4) Ludvig can you [start (0.4) Ludvig
4. Freja [heh heh
5. Ludvig ah- jag kan fortsätta då ah- I can continue then
6. Tutor mm, mm
7. Ludvig eh: (0.4) i min: (0.6) bas:grupp (.) andra basgrupp eh (0.4) in my (0.6) tutorial group (.) other tutorial group
8. av nån anledning så går vi åt andra hållet for some reason we go the other way around
9. (. ) jag vet [inte varför (. ) I don’t know why
10. Freja [just det jus-
11. Hanna [heh heh
12. Ludvig de:t (. ) så: (0.2) ja- jag tycker man ska gå it (. ) so (0.2) I think you should go
13. med klockan clockwise

Despite the tutor’s earlier preemptive hand gesture, direct eye gaze, and verbal request, Ludvig still does not begin without first confirming (“I can
continue then”; line 5). He also glances briefly at the tutor, then back to straight ahead, then back to the tutor immediately prior to this turn. Unlike many others in the group, he was not already looking directly at the tutor, so this flicked eye movement then signals a visible “check” of where the discussion is heading. Once Ludvig has the floor, he continues to manage the assumption that he should go first. In fact, his use of the term “continue” rather than “start” groups together his introduction as the second rather than the first (thus including the tutor as part of the group presentation round). The additional “then” (“då” in Swedish, often used to soften the directness of an utterance) contributes to this construction as a suggested follow-up of the tutor’s introduction rather than an assumed place in the conversational order. Ludvig then provides an account (lines 7–9) of how the introductions in his other tutorial group went in a counterclockwise direction, thus also potentially accounting for why he may have expected not to be the next speaker. In combination, the flicked eye gaze (rather than already watching the tutor and so visibly expecting to go next), the “I can continue then,” and the brief account of whether it should go clockwise or counterclockwise all help to manage the delicate situation of “going first.”

The student introductions then continue to highlight their study programme and other education or work previously conducted. Mirroring the tutor’s account of career changes, some of the students note how they made a specific move from a different programme to their current one. We return again to Ludvig’s introduction:
Extract 6

1. Ludvig sen: (0.6) ja jag har alltid velat bli läkare then (0.6) yeah- I have always wanted to be a doctor
2. (0.6) och: (0.4) ja sen jag var- (0.2) så länge jag (0.6) and (0.4) yeah since I was- (0.2) as long as
3. kan minnas i princip (0.4) och nu kom in I can remember basically (0.4) and now come into
4. på läkareprogrammet då (0.2) efter jag har the medicine programme then (0.2) after I had
5. jobbat: (0.4) ett långt tag inom hemtjänsten worked (0.4) a long time in the home service

Extract 6 presents the almost iconic phrase “I have always wanted to be a doctor” (line 1), which, as the first of the students to present themselves, is rather a bold move to make. In Group A, for instance, it was common for students to only mention which programme they were taking as part of a list of things to say about themselves. By contrast, Ludvig begins with details about his age and where he comes from, and then, after a reasonable pause, begins the section that we see in Extract 6. This part of the introduction acts as if it were an additional piece of information rather than the first thing to know about him. A similar pattern is noted with another student in Group B:

Extract 7

1. Freja umgås med kompisar ((laughs)) kolla på serier och- hang out with friends ((laughs)) watch TV series and
2. (1.4)
3. Freja så där (0.4) jah, (0.2) vad ska man saga mer (0.2) like that (.4) yeah (0.2) what should one say more (0.2)
4. eh:m (0.4) jag vill också bli barnmorska eh:m (0.4) I also want to become a midwife

Immediately prior to this extract, Freja has stated how old she is, where she has lived, and her hobbies. As with Ludvig in Extract 6, her announcement
about what she wants to become is tagged on after a reasonable pause (line 2) and a voiced “what should one say more” (line 3), as if trying to think of what to say next. In Extracts 6 and 7, not only do both students reveal something that puts themselves forward as having a particular professional identity, but they do this at just the point when their turn might have passed to the next speaker. This works well to manage the potential that they might be treated as “taking this too seriously” or as asserting their professional identity over other shared, common interests such as hobbies or sports (Stokoe et al., 2013). As in Group A, Freja here connects with the tutor’s stated career history (working as a midwife) with the use of the word “också” (“also”; line 4) and thus helps to make her stated professional aspirations about what they have in common, rather than what Freja is specifically interested in.

In Group B the tutor’s detailed account of her working life and career provided an interactional space in which the students could (and did) construct their professional identity beyond the “I’m studying nursing” type of statement. Even so, when students did orient to such an identity, they did so in a way that appeared as a more casual statement, mentioning this after information about their hobbies or where they had lived. This allowed them to situate themselves both professionally—as following distinct career paths—and as just another student in a PBL group.

**Group C**

The structure of the introduction is rather different in Group C. The tutor has begun the process in which she asks the group members to introduce themselves, but she does so by writing on the whiteboard (see Figure 6.4) a list of things that the students should say: name, educational programme, where they live, any jobs outside of university, hobbies, special career interests, what they would do if they won a million kronor, or what animal they would choose to be. The list therefore includes both professional and private life examples, as well as more unusual things to talk about.

This process takes some time; a few minutes pass in silence as she writes this list, reading it aloud as she does so. Those students facing the board watch the tutor for some time, while those whose backs are to the board (see Figure 6.4) typically look down at the table or sporadically turn around to look at the board. Soon after the tutor returns to the table, she invites one of the students to begin:
Extract 8

1. Tutor  
   mm (.) vem vill börja då  
   *Mm (.) who wants to start then*

2. (2.0)

3. Lovisa  
   .tch ah jag kan börj(hh)ar (.) eh (jag) heter  
   *.tch ab I can sta(hh)rt (.) eh I'm*

4. Lovisa  
   jag är från (city) men bor här  
   *Lovisa I'm from (city) but live here*

5. i (town) i (specific area)  
   *in (town) in (specific area)*

Of all the introductions, this is perhaps the one that is most risky for the group members in terms of putting themselves forward to “go first.” Note that—in contrast to Groups A and B—both the tutor and Lovisa refer to this being the start rather than a continuation of the introductions (lines 1 and 3), since the tutor has not yet given her full presentation. At the beginning of the tutorial, the tutor has briefly noted that she knows Lovisa from
a previous group. This then provides for Lovisa to be the one to step forward and take the lead. We can also note the interpolated or plosive laughter on line 3, positioned in exactly the word that is potentially troublesome, start (“börjar”); not only does this mark a source of interactional trouble, but it also manages a speaker's stance on this (Potter & Hepburn, 2010). In other words, it enables Lovisa to use the same term as the tutor, rather than reformulating it (e.g., by using “continue”), as well as to orient to the term as a delicate interactional matter without directly stating this. What is noticeable, however, is that there is no checking with the tutor—no further tutor input at this point—and so while Lovisa slightly ironises her initiation of the task, it is not so tentatively achieved as in Group A or B.

Lovisa then continues to state her educational programme, in line with the list on the whiteboard, and so the student follows a more structured way of introducing oneself than was seen in Groups A and B:

Extract 9

1. Lovisa ah-jag pluggar till SSK asså sjuksköterska
2. yeah, I'm studying in SSK, I mean nursing
3. (. ) eh (. ) har även pluggat och pluggar
4. (. ) eh (. ) have also studied and study
5. medicinsk biologi
6. medical biology

The immediate reference to the professional programme—in this case, nursing—is therefore likely to be strongly influenced by the list on the whiteboard, where “education” is top of the list. As in Extracts 2 and 3, the shortened version of the programme (“SSK,” short for nursing in Swedish) is used before stating the name in full. In this interprofessional context, then, students are already aligning with a professional identity, however minimally that may be. The shift from the abbreviation (SSK) to the full name (sjuksköterska) then also orients to the others in the group; this would not have been necessary in a group in which all students were studying in the same programme. Following Lovisa’s introduction, the tutor then repeats her name and her education (“Lovisa, SSK”), which she says will help her to remember each person in the group. That this is a larger group, with nine students, is one of the reasons the tutor uses to highlight the difficulties in remembering details about everyone.
The rest of the students in this group then follow the same pattern, checking regularly with the list on the board, and almost all start with their names and professional programmes, for example:

hm jag heter Anna: (.) går sjuksköterskeprogrammet

hm I'm Anna (.) studying nursing

jag heter Ellinor (.) pluggar läkarprogrammet

I'm Ellinor (.) studying medicine

eh jag heter Wilma och går på sjuksköterskeutbildningen

eh I'm Wilma and studying nursing education

ah heter Adam och går läkarprogrammet

ah I'm Adam and studying medicine

Note that there are variations in the verbs used in Swedish (går, går på, pluggar), but the English translation is the same for each. Through the combination of the whiteboard list and the explicit repetition by the tutor of the first student’s name and study programme, the structure of the introductions has been reinforced to include the professional identity immediately following the students’ names. In the same way that a hometown or nationality can become a way to introduce oneself (e.g., I’m Anna and I’m from Sweden), so here the close association between name and professional identity is established in this first meeting of the interprofessional programme.

The pattern in Group C is notably different from those of Groups A and B. The students, without exception, provide information on each of the points noted in the list on the whiteboard. At times this feels mechanical, as if checking off items rather than providing interesting personal details, though there are points at which a student refers to an interest similar to a previous speaker’s. While the list includes specific career aspirations—and so technically provides an opportunity for students to assert a professional identity—most of the students say that they don’t know what they specifically want to focus on in their careers.

Group D
In the final group, the pattern is different again. Here the tutor opens the tutorial with a very brief “my name is” introduction, before saying that
they will begin with a brief presentation round. As in Group C—and in contrast to Groups A and B—the students do not hear much about their tutor before they are asked to say something about themselves. In this case, they are asked only to say one thing about themselves. Instead of asking for volunteers, the tutor instead uses a hand gesture toward the student on the right (see Figure 6.5) as a direct nonverbal request for the next speaker:

Extract 10

1. Tutor  man kan säga (0.6) sitt namn och säga en sak som
   *one can say (0.6) their name and say one thing*

2. de tycker om
   *they like*

3. (1.0) *(tutor gestures to Carolina; see Figure 6.5)*

4. Carolina  eh: ja (0.4) jag heter Carolina (0.2) och jag gillar
   *eh yeah (0.4) I'm Carolina (0.2) and I like*

5. att rita
   *to draw*

6. (1.0)

7. Tutor  mm

8. (1.0)

9. Mattias  jag heter Mattias (0.4) jag gillar ehm:: (0.6) se på film
   *I'm Mattias (0.4) I like ehm:: (0.6) to watch movies*

10. (0.8)

11. Tutor  mm

12. (0.6)

13. Rose  eh:: jag heter Rose (0.8) ehm jag tycker om att laga mat
   *eh I'm Rose (0.8) ehm I like to cook*
14. (1.0)
15. Rasmus  jag heter Rasmus (. ) jag tycker om opera och piano
   *I'm Rasmus (. ) I like opera and piano*

16. (0.8)
17. Tutor  mm
18. (1.0)
19. Ulrika  jag heter Ulrika (. ) jag tycker om att resa
   *I'm Ulrika (. ) I like to travel*

20. (1.0)
21. Stina  jag heter Stina och jag gillar: (. ) djur
   *I'm Stina and I like: (. ) animals*

22. (1.0)
23. Tutor  mm (. ) jag heter Natalie och jag gillar balett
   *mm (. ) I'm Natalie and I like ballet*

This form of introduction is thus very different from the previous three groups’. The presentation of all of the students and the tutor lasts less than 1 minute, in contrast to around 10 to 15 minutes in the other groups. While the tutor asks them to state only one thing they like, it is clear that each of them chooses something that could be defined as a hobby or nonwork activity, and this pattern is adhered to for the whole group. While this does not allow for any expansion on their experiences or interests, it does allow the group to very quickly learn one thing about their fellow group members that they might not otherwise have known.

The tutor then talks through some practical issues—as happens in the other groups—such as stating her phone number, so that they can contact her if needed. She then introduces an “ice breaker” in which the (inter) professional identities are explicitly introduced. On the whiteboard, the tutor draws a circle and marks sections to demarcate the different professional programmes; the students are then each asked to say their names when she reads out the different programmes. The circle, she notes, then represents some of the things that they have in common and some things that they will bring in terms of specific knowledge.

In Group D the structure of the introductions is clearly guided by the tutor and delays any reference to the professional programmes until the interprofessional focus of the group work is discussed more explicitly. The tutor sets the limits regarding what can be said by the students, and her own introduction is then provided after the students’. There is minimal opportunity for the students to claim a professional identity at this point.
DISCUSSION

The analyses presented here provide a unique insight into the opening moments of the first PBL tutorial in an IPL programme. While each of the groups demonstrated different ways of structuring the introductions, a common pattern was that the students’ responses closely followed those of the tutor. This occurred not because the students were asked to respond in a particular way (they were told directly in Groups C and D what to say, but not in Groups A and B), but rather because the tutors provided the interactional context in which one or other type of response was appropriate. The students therefore presented themselves in a manner that was provided for by the tutors and that maintained a fairly normative pattern to not overtly position oneself in a professional identity over an academic identity. In other words, “being a student” seemed to be the norm in this context over “being a student from a specific professional programme.” Within this broader framework, finer patterns could be identified, such as the delicate multimodal management of being the first to speak through gestures or eye gaze and whether one’s professional identity was included in a list of relevant items or as a feature in itself.

These findings provide support for research noted in the introduction. First, they add further evidence for work on group formation (Hempel & Jern, 2000; Wheelan, 2005), which notes that in the early stages of group development, members are likely to be more cautious and guided by the leader in terms of what is appropriate. Second, they contribute to research on academic identities and the risks of being treated as “too engaged” in the academic process (Stokoe et al., 2013). Not only does the analysis demonstrate that members might be more cautious in their conversational practices, but it also begins to show how this cautiousness was achieved interactionally. Finally, in terms of the literature on communication in IPL contexts, our analysis suggests that in these early stages of the tutorial group, professional identities were not so prominently discussed nor visible. We speculate that it might be during later stages of group development that these identities would become more apparent. At that point, it may be a greater concern to understand how one’s role fits with that of other group members, and at that point conflicts are more likely to arise. There is therefore much to be done in terms of examining further moments in which students’ professional knowledge or identities are made relevant and consequential in PBL interaction. This would be useful both for IPL programmes, in which the explicit aim is often to create a more effective and cooperative working environment, and for PBL
more generally. One of the benefits of recording a number of PBL groups for the duration of their course is that we can examine group and interactional processes as these develop over time. Recording multiple groups also enables a comparison of how groups can vary even when engaged in apparently identical tasks. Further research into PBL might then consider how to develop a collection of examples that could then drive forward research into the longitudinal processes that can be difficult to see in “snapshot” studies of brief moments from one PBL tutorial.

We also see considerable potential in the development of collaborative research within and across disciplines to enable new theoretical and practical insights into PBL tutorial interaction. There is a considerable divide between social psychological research into group processes and PBL research (Öystilä, 2006; Wiggins, Hammar Chiriac, Larsson Abbad, Pauli, & Worrell, 2016). Our own research aims to bring together research on group formation processes with discourse and interaction research to examine how the mechanics of introducing oneself to the group can illuminate these broader processes, and we hope to have begun to illustrate not only the potential of interactional analyses but also the combination of this with other areas of research.

CONCLUSION

Our analysis begins to detail how the early moments of a PBL tutorial group are managed interactionally. It can be challenging to put oneself forward as a student in an interprofessional context, so it is much less problematic if the tutor initiates this discussion. If not, it can be much more difficult interactionally for students to take the initiative and introduce new points of interest. Similarly, by suggesting that introductions be “in the round” (i.e., one person at a time, starting with a student sitting next to the tutor and moving around in a circle), and through subtle eye gazes or hand gestures, tutors can provide the interactional cues necessary for the students to speak out without appearing to be taking the lead.

REFERENCES


APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS
(Adapted from Hepburn & Bolden, 2017)

(.) a micropause of less than two-tenths of a second
(0.4) a silence measured in tenths of seconds
[ the onset of overlapping talk
£ smiley voice
“yeh” quiet speech enclosed in degree symbols
? clear rising intonation at the end of a word
, slightly rising intonation
hh audible outbreath
(hh) plosive laughter within a word
heh laughter particle
>yeah< speeded up talk
<right> slowed down talk
yeah- cut-off sound indicated by a hyphen
eh:: stretched sounds within or at the end of a word
(city) anonymization of specific details
((tutor)) comments on the transcript