VU Research Portal

Developing students as global learners: "Groups in Our World" blog

Meinecke, A.L.; Smith, K.; Lehmann-Willenbrock, N.K.

document version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Link to publication in VU Research Portal

Small Group Research

**Developing Students As Global Learners: "Groups in Our World"
Blog**

Annika L. Meinecke, Kim K. Smith and Nale Lehmann-Willenbrock

The online version of this article can be found at:

Additional services and information for *Small Group Research* can be found at:

Email Alerts: http://sgr.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts

Subscriptions: http://sgr.sagepub.com/subscriptions

Reprints: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav

Permissions: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

>> OnlineFirst Version of Record - May 7, 2013

What is This?

Developing Students As Global Learners: "Groups in Our World" Blog

Annika L. Meinecke[1], Kim K. Smith[2] and Nale Lehmann-Willenbrock[3]

Abstract

This case study investigates the use of online blogs as a teaching tool. A collaborative blog was implemented in parallel classes on group processes in the United States and Germany. Our goal was to connect American and German graduate students by helping them to talk about group communication and meeting behaviors. Collected data included transcripts of the messages, as well as students' evaluations of the blog (collected at the end of the project). Quantitative analyses assessed students' participation rates and the content of their postings. Qualitative analysis examined the use of the blog as a teaching and learning tool. The results showed that students interacted more on the blog than was required by the instructor. Students valued blogging as a new learning experience. We discuss the pedagogical implications of blog usage for teaching about groups and provide recommendations for instructors interested in using blogs in their own courses.

Keywords

blogging, classroom groups, intercultural learning

[1]TU Braunschweig, Braunschweig, Germany
[2]University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI, USA
[3]VU University Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Corresponding Author:
Annika L. Meinecke, TU Braunschweig, Department of Industrial/Organizational and Social Psychology Spielmannstr. 19, 38106 Braunschweig, Germany
Email: annika.meinecke@tu-bs.de

As our world, and the world of teams, becomes increasingly global, students should be encouraged to experience communicating about group processes with people from different cultures. Students today will likely experience working in an intercultural team at one point in their lives, or will have to collaborate with coworkers from other cultural backgrounds (e.g., Hinds, Liu, & Lyon, 2011). The idea to bring students with different cultural backgrounds together to learn about groups was conceived at the 2007 INGRoup Conference, where we decided to try to connect students in graduate-level group communication courses from both the United States and Germany. The goal of this shared project was to enable students to learn and talk to each other about groups in general, and about meeting behaviors (a type of group interaction) in particular. Although we found few strong differences between the two cultures, the differences that we did find indicate that the use of blogs in teaching and learning can promote intercultural learning about group processes.

We expected that blog discussions would help students to broaden their knowledge and deepen their understanding of theories and concepts related to groups and teams. To accomplish these aims, an online blog was set up to serve as a space where both sets of students could interact with one another (see Appendix A for a screenshot). Technology is increasingly present in the classroom (Huffman & Huffman, 2012; Martin, Diaz, Sancristobal, Gil, Castro, & Peire, 2011). Some might even argue that to keep up with society, we must learn how to incorporate technology into all of our pedagogy (see Eisner, 2004). In this article, we illustrate one example of the effective use of blogs in a college class(room). We demonstrate its potential usefulness for reflective thinking and learning. We argue that blogs are inherently built for learning about groups, and we provide a roadmap of strategies instructors should consider when incorporating blogs into their courses.

Research on Blogs and Learning

Blogs and similar forms of online discussion groups are becoming increasingly popular as an educational technology for teaching and learning (e.g., Churchill, 2009; Deng & Yuen, 2011; Kang, Bonk, & Kim, 2011; Richardson, 2006). Currently, several universities have implemented blogs into various curricula (e.g., Harvard University; University of Iowa; Williams & Jacobs, 2004). Blogs are an example of a collaborative learning contest (Määttä, Järvenoja, & Järvelä, 2012), one where students are actively engaged in learning by asking each other questions, explaining and justifying their opinions, and reflecting on their own knowledge.

Basic blog technology is available as open-source software, with many different websites providing free blog space to individuals who sign up as

members of a site. For example, we used www.blogspot.com. An online blog can be set up in a matter of minutes, so using blogs in teaching and learning costs little and yet can yield a high return on investments (Dyrud, Worley, & Flatley, 2005). Also, blogging allows not only for knowledge exchange, but for the archiving of information, making the information available for retrieval at any point (Bausch, Haughey, & Hourihan, 2002). In this manner, blogs can act as an online storage system for ideas.

To date, literature on the pedagogical use of blogs is sparse. The existing research suggests that blogs naturally provide a space for reflection and analysis, in addition to encouraging feedback simply by design as most blogs allow comments (Williams & Jacobs, 2004). A blog, as an asynchronous discussion forum offers participants the chance to reflect, to take time to think, to search for additional information, and to carefully prepare messages before sharing them with others (e.g., Pena-Shaff & Nicholls, 2004). The process of submitting ideas and creating blog posts appears to encourage students to become more critically analytical in their thinking (e.g., William & Jacobs, 2004). Taken together, blogs as a teaching tool may encourage students to engage with the ideas of their peers and challenge or support one another. However, more research is needed to explore the potential benefits of blogs as teaching tools.

Blogs as a Means of Reflection

Built into the blog experience is the element of reflection. Reflection involves specific behaviors such as questioning, exploratory learning, analysis, using knowledge explicitly, learning at a meta-level, reviewing past events with self-awareness, and, over time, coming to terms with new awareness (West, 2000). Individuals have a natural tendency to reflect when they consider their performance on a task (Moreland & McMinn, 2010). However, research to date has not fully explored the role of reflection in group processes. In fact, Moreland and McMinn (2010) have argued that group reflection can be beneficial, but only under certain circumstances. Blogging may be one such circumstance. Reflections about past experience are a form of self-report data, and such data do not always provide a reliable and accurate representation of what actually occurred. Blogging may be one way to improve self-reports, because a blog provides a space for people to write about a particular topic, and those contributions can later be examined for tangible evidence of what was happening at a particular time. As a result, people do not need to use much memory to produce self-reports, and third-party researchers can examine those self-reports to track the actual progression of group interaction processes.

Successful reflection must meet several criteria. For example, reflection should occur soon after a task has been performed, be structured rather than informal, focus on selected topics, involve all group members, and be followed by further performance of the task (Baird, Holland, & Deacon, 1999). Blogging seems to meet all of these criteria. First, blogs are *immediate*. Reflection can occur whenever the learner wants to write. This is one of the major advantages of computer-mediated communication, in that users have the ability to use it at their convenience, often in an asynchronous manner (see De Wever, Schellens, Valcke, & Van Keer, 2006). A user can start working on a blog entry, save it to look for extra information or to read other people's blog entries, and then revise the blog entry before finally submitting it. And a user must carefully choose his or her words in order to convey meaning clearly (Pena-Shaff & Nicholls, 2004), which can trigger even more reflection. Arguably, then, reflection does not only take place after submitting a blog entry, but during the writing of that entry as well. Second, blogs are *structured*. An instructor can control the blogging process as much or as little as he or she desires. Third, blogs are *selective*. A blog can focus on a specific topic and be limited to concepts learned in class, but it can also be flexible enough for students to apply their personal experiences and ideas. Fourth, blogs are *all-inclusive.* Incorporating a blog into a course implies that everyone in the class needs to participate to receive a grade. Whether or not every student indeed participates will largely depend on the culture of the course and the sense of community felt by the students. Finally, blogs are *continuous.* A blog may exist only for the duration of a course, or it can continue after the course has ended. The tasks of reflecting, applying course concepts, and communicating with others in the group can thus continue and be repeated beyond the context of the course, providing a space for continuous learning.

Learning About Groups

A blog is a forum for interaction. Students can not only write new blog posts, but also comment on each other's posts, making blogs a place where new ideas are often formulated through collaboration (Deng & Yuen, 2011; Dyrud et al., 2005). As such, the act of blogging is collaborative and is in itself a group process.

To our knowledge, no study has yet explored the usefulness of blogs to teach people about groups and group processes. Moreover, we have not found any previous research (outside of work on language learning) on the use of blogs to connect different cultural groups. Williams and Jacobs (2004) claim that blogs help students to confront their own opinions and consider how those opinions might be digested by others. This makes blogs particularly

interesting from an intercultural perspective. The use of blogs in the classroom has the potential to allow students to consider their own thoughts and opinions. The *intercultural* use of blogs, then, adds another dimension to the classroom by encouraging students to think about how they are saying things—not just to get their point across, but to reach an audience whose language, values, and cultural context may differ. Even if specific differences are not readily obvious, students can use ideas and examples from others to build their own understanding of concepts. Arguably, in addition to exploring whether or not intercultural differences exist, an intercultural blog can also encourage self-reflection and raise awareness of one's own cultural values and behavioral patterns (cf. Hofstede, Pedersen, & Hofstede, 2002).

In sum, despite the potential benefits of blogs as a teaching tool, no one yet knows whether or how an online blog may support learning about groups, or how the reflective nature of blogging can be intensified through an intercultural approach. We decided to explore the following questions: How does the use of a blog supplement classroom teaching about small groups and group processes? How can a blog be used to foster reflection? Finally, how can a blog be used to bridge the boundaries between cultures and to combine the perspectives of different cultures on groups?

Method

Participants

Participants were eight American students (four female and four male) from a Midwestern university, and nine German students (eight female and one male) from a university in Germany. The German students were enrolled in a course entitled Team Diagnosis and Team Development, as part of their 1st-year graduate program for psychology. The American students were enrolled in a course entitled Communication in Groups and Teams, which was a graduate-level course designed to develop an understanding of group communication.

None of the German or American students reported any experience with blogging prior to the project. All students owned computers and thus were able to access the blog either from home or during class. We gained permission to analyze the blog data by collecting informed consent from each of the students before the project began.

Learning Objectives and Blog Details

The intercultural blog project took place over a period of 6 weeks. We thought the blog would be particularly helpful for the German students, who might be

hesitant to express themselves in English. Blogs are also less prone to time restrictions than are other interaction forms (e.g., face-to-face communication or Skype), which helped us to bridge the considerable time zone difference between the United States and Germany. Specifically, the learning objectives for the project were to (a) improve the observation and assessment of groups by students in their everyday environments; (b) increase knowledge about cross-cultural team meeting behaviors; (c) reflect on intercultural differences in reactions to team meetings, and (d) practice reflection skills by considering both the original posts by students from one culture and the way those students responded to posts by students from the other culture.

A blog was set up (823groupworld@blogspot.com) where both the American and the German students were initially asked to write about groups they observed in their everyday lives (e.g., which groups did they observe, what group members were doing, how they were doing it). Each student was assigned to produce a minimum of three blog entries and two responses during the semester, but students were encouraged to visit, post, and respond to each others' contributions more often than that (and they did). Students were cautioned that their entries should include theories, concepts, or ideas about groups that were being taught in class. Students were also invited to discuss and assess their own communication behavior in groups. Each week, both the American and German students discussed in class what they found most interesting about what had appeared on the blog that week, what surprised them (if anything), and what they learned.

Discussion Themes. In addition, students were provided with one scenario per week of a difficult situation that might occur when a group meets. We chose meetings as a topic because they are an increasingly frequent group activity (e.g., Rogelberg, Shanock, & Scott, 2012). The scenarios were based on previous research concerning functional and dysfunctional team meeting processes (e. g., Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012; Kauffeld & Meyers, 2009; Lehmann-Willenbrock, Meyers, Kauffeld, Neininger, & Henschel, 2011). Two examples of the scenarios we used are offered below:

> Scenario 1: You are in a team meeting and the atmosphere is very depressing. People keep complaining about their jobs and how nothing will work out. You have the impression that all participants get sucked into this negative way of thinking. What do you do?
>
> Scenario 2: Imagine you are new to the team. This is your second team meeting with these people. You have the impression that the others have considerably more knowledge about the situation or subject than you do. You feel a little left out. What do you do?

Both sets of students were asked to picture themselves in each scenario and to blog about their most likely reaction to the scenario. On these weeks, all students were required to post and respond. Students then compared and contrasted the responses from both classes and discussed why any intercultural differences/similarities in the responses to the scenarios might have occurred.

Data Collection

Data were collected in the spring of 2011. Each student was asked to reflect on all of the blog entries for the scenario, and then to address the following questions regarding the postings and responses:

1. Do you see any differences and/or similarities in how the German students and American students addressed the situation (solution proposed, tone, certainty, creativity, etc)?
2. If so, what are the differences/similarities you perceive? Did you notice any other differences/similarities overall?

These summaries were exchanged, so that the German students read what the American students discovered about differences/similarities in reactions to the scenario, and vice versa. Discussion then took place in the respective classrooms on what was learned about team meeting behaviors across the two cultures. Moreover, we asked students for their evaluation and feedback to examine whether they valued the use of the blog as a learning tool. We asked them to name their top three highlights during the blog experience and to indicate what they might change (and why) if they were the instructor or were to do the exercise again. These evaluations were collected in both classes.

Exploratory Results

A total of 160 messages were generated during the project, including 85 original blog posts and 75 subsequent comments. On average, students contributed five blog posts, with a range of 3 to 10 posts. When it came to commenting on other students' blog posts, students wrote 4.41 comments on average (min = 1; max = 11). Thus, most students exceeded the required minimum number of three blog posts and two comments, as stated in the course requirements.

To obtain a basic understanding of the interaction that took place on the blog, we coded all of the messages into broad categories. The first author, along with a student research assistant, independently coded every blog entry and comment. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's κ. Interrater reliability reached $\kappa = .94$.
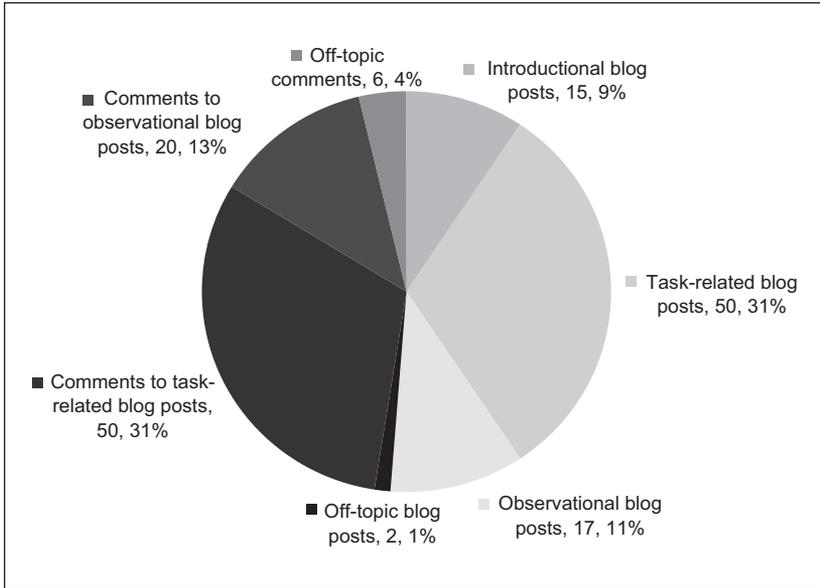
Figure 1. Percentage of Different Messages Posted to the Blog.

Examples of each category are provided in Appendix B. Figure 1 illustrates the descriptive analysis. In the beginning of the course, students were asked to introduce themselves to one another. These introductory messages made up 9% of all the messages. Next, students were asked to describe a group that they had observed in their everyday lives to make them familiar with the act of blogging itself. These messages represented 11% of all messages, and were met by 20 responses (13%). In the following, most of the messages (31%) posted on the blog focused on the different scenarios of group meeting situations, followed by comments (31%) to these postings. The number of messages that coded as *off-topic* was fairly small (5%).

Learning About Groups: Meeting Behaviors

The central topic for the blog was group meeting behaviors. In their exploration of the various meeting behavior scenarios, the German and American students shared how they would personally react in each situation. Doing so, each set of students presented their own cultural expectations when it comes to meetings, which are a common and increasingly frequent group experience (e.g., Rogelberg, Leach, Warr, & Burnfield, 2006).

What was interesting regarding meeting behaviors was that German and American students had similar approaches of dealing with each scenario. The blog provided a forum to share individual responses in a collective format. Students were able to read what their peers felt about each scenario and compare that with their own beliefs and preferences, while considering whether there were cultural differences in these responses. Mostly there were not. Many of the responses were similar, regardless of culture. Both sets of students often stated that their actions in response to the proposed scenarios would depend on the particular context. We also discovered that students from both cultures would deal with many common meeting problems by summarizing the statements of group members and then openly addressing the problem by looking for what was working well and then building on that.

Despite these common threads, there are a few key differences in how German and American students approached the meeting scenarios. For example, Americans tended to talk more about personal experiences when describing the reasoning behind their responses, and they used such phrases as "I think" or "I would" more frequently than did the German students. The American students also used humor to deal with situations more often and were more direct in their communication. German students, in contrast, were more discreet, tried to be nicer and find the correct, or most appropriate, responses to each scenario. They also stayed more focused on the topic. There were also several behaviors described in the scenarios, such as holding side conversations during meetings, that the German students found appropriate whereas the American students found them inappropriate, and vice versa. For example, American students stated that the person in charge needs to discipline the members involved in these side conversations. The German students, in contrast, hardly mentioned rank at all. Instead, they emphasized trying to build connections between the side conversation and the main conversation.

Students' Perceptions

Overall, the students appreciated the use of the blog, as indicated by their written evaluations collected at the end of the project. They reported that the exchange of ideas and interaction with students from another culture was enjoyable. For example, two students wrote:

> "First, I would like to say that I really liked the situations that were posed and the intercultural connection via the blog, I thought this was a really great experience!"

"Overall, I thought this was a great learning experience and it really expanded my knowledge of how people deal with groups."

The blog was also viewed as helpful by many students, in part because it lowered language barriers. Five out of the nine German students stated that they enjoyed reading and writing in English. The German students further reported that they liked the overall format of blogging because it gave them a chance to write a text, save it, and edit it later before posting it.

Despite these advantages of the blogging experience, several students felt that working on the blog was too time-consuming, considering that they also had other course work to do. Looking back, they said that they mostly focused on posting blog posts and working on the different scenarios. However, they wished they would have had more time to write comments and get into more detail of how they would react in each group situation. One way to improve this might be to select a smaller number of specific group scenarios, but have the students write more comments about them instead.

Discussion

Benefits: Using Blogs to Learn About Groups

The available literature suggests that using blogs as a medium for learning is a good way to encourage reflection, share knowledge, and work through ideas (e.g., Deng & Yuen, 2011). However, there is no previous research on the use of blogs to teach students about groups, or to explore intercultural differences in group behavior. Our study took some initial steps to fill these gaps. Students from an American and a German graduate course spent several weeks during the same semester talking with one another about different aspects of group communication.

Overall, our analysis showed that students were very focused on the scenarios that they were required to think and write about. Students were able to read about one another's reactions to various topics, and they were also given a chance to learn about the ideas of people from another culture. The students spent time developing their thoughts on the blog and crafting responses to the posts of others. The use of the blog provided a way to hold an ongoing discussion about meeting behaviors and other group phenomena, where students could add their thoughts as the semester progressed and ask for advice from people whose cultural background was different. For example, one German student wrote:

"Teams can also appoint someone to be 'the Devil's Advocate'. This person, no matter what his own position toward a topic is, has to argue the unpopular side.

> When I heard of this method, I found it pretty cool. But when I know think about it and imagine to be the Devil's Advocate, I think it must be very hard to always find something bad about something, isn't it? Does anybody have experiences with this method? How did it work out?"

The blog offered a space for students to reflect about things that were discussed in their class. For example, one American student wrote: "On the first day of class, we had quite a lengthy discussion about what constitutes a 'group' and since then I think we've been trying to determine whether or not certain combinations of people qualify." Other blog posts illustrated how students were able to relate things they learned in class to their everyday experiences in groups:

> "My first day of teaching this semester was on Tuesday, the day after our first day of Groups. I tried to look at my group of students based on what we discussed in class on Monday. First, I considered whether or not my Comm 105 students could be classified as a group. Are there more than 3 people? Yes. Are there more than 15? Yes, but there are only about 20, so I wondered if some of the things we discussed in class would still be applicable. Did they all have a common goal?"

Group phenomena that turned out to be the hot topics on the blog were discussed again in class and evaluated from an intercultural perspective. The main benefits of the blog were that it offered a place for all of the students to reflect at any given time, and it dramatically facilitated contributions by German students, who might have been more reserved in face-to-face situation, due to language barriers.

Both the American and German students wrote a brief analysis and reflection about the ideas shared on the blog about meeting behaviors. The process of reflection involves stepping back from and pondering the meaning of an experience. In our study, reflection took place both individually (as students wrote on the blog about what they had observed), and collectively, as students discussed their ideas in class and shared them with students from the other class. Thus, blogs can serve as both reflective and interactive devices (Deng & Yuen, 2011).

Moreover, the design of the blog project itself offered an opportunity to actively participate in a group. Not only did participants have an opportunity to learn about group communication, but each contributor to the blog also served as a member of a group, and thus experienced group processes of reflection, knowledge sharing, and idea generation. Blogs can also create a community of learners, as multiple people comment on a particular blog entry, write original posts for others to read, and work together to tackle

tough questions (Williams & Jacobs, 2004). Our students were able to share ideas as a group and communicate across the boundaries of space and time. The project offered some flexibility for students, in that they could choose when to post comments about course concepts and other matters.

Blogs have the potential to provide greater interaction with peers, even across cultures or countries, and at the same time they can foster autonomy and reflection. As a generation of computer-literate students enters higher education, it is important for instructors to be aware of the skills and expectations of students in the classroom (Wang, Huang, Jeng, & Wang, 2008). Blogging is one of the most popular social media activities. A 2010 survey of Internet usage indicated that four in five social media users access blogs, and 89% of those users are in their 20's (Kang et al., 2011). Instructors can take advantage of blogs as an opportunity to plug learning into the virtual spaces that their students may already occupy.

Challenges: Using Blogs to Learn About Groups

The real challenge in creating a successful learning space for students to learn about groups is for the instructor to structure it appropriately. The topic should be narrow enough to give students a sense of direction, but still broad enough to provide an opportunity for students to expand their thinking. In addition to carefully considering blog topics and structure, another challenge for instructors is encouraging adequate participation from students. It is not guaranteed that all students will participate in a blog, even if it is assigned by an instructor. The challenge faced by an instructor wishing to use blogs in the classroom is to create some accountability among the students when it comes to blog contributions.

Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

In order for blog use to be successful as a teaching tool, there has to be some way to monitor student progress and to maintain interest in the blog. For example, instructors could incorporate check-ins throughout the semester, where students can summarize the blog activity and have in-class discussions about the posts on the blog. Instructors should incorporate the blog into the curriculum so it is not just an extra thing that students have to do, but also an intentional part of the overall learning process. For example, we asked students to contribute to in-class discussions about what was being written on the blog. Our students were also required to contribute to the blog a certain number of original posts and comments in order to pass the class. However, overwhelming students with rules and expectations for the number of

contributed blog posts or words per post could lessen the overall learning potential and effectiveness of blog use.

Limitations and Future Research

More research is needed to unravel the underlying mechanisms by which blogging leads to enhanced learning. Does using a blog as a group help students to learn about group processes, and if so, then why? Our study explored what would happen when two classes of students from different cultures came together to write about groups. Thus, although the learning objectives for the use of the blog were laid out for students, the goals of the study were less structured and more about exploring the possibilities and the process.
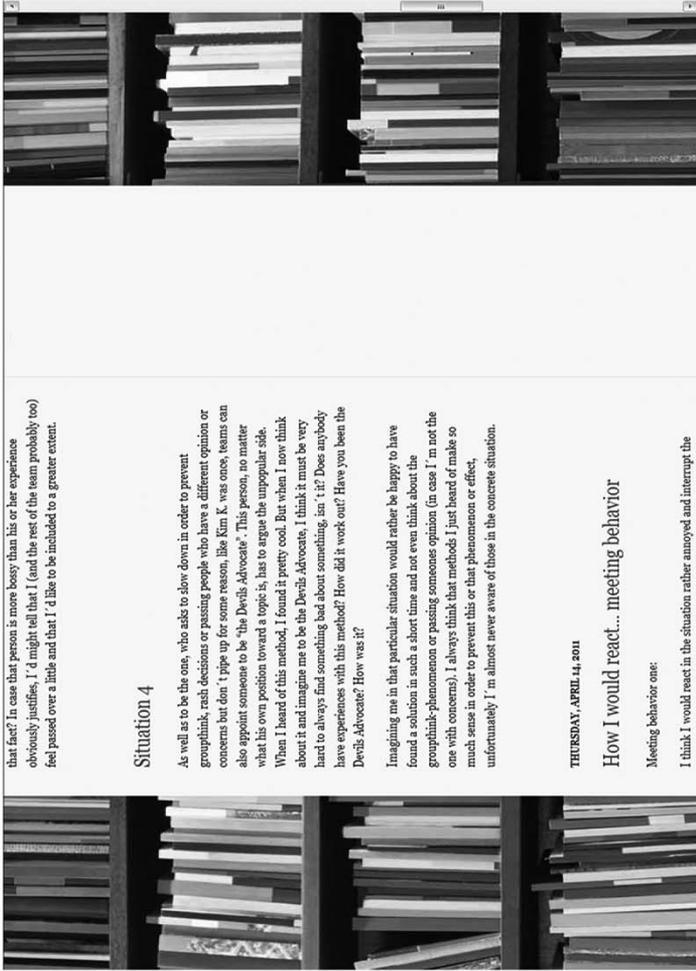
The relative lack of intercultural differences found in our study may have been due to conformity effects across the two cultures; maybe students in one country heard the opinions of students in the other country, and then used those opinions as guidelines on how to respond themselves. Future research could address this issue by limiting the time windows for posting messages during the online discussion process.

Obviously, not all blogs will be automatically successful as a group process. It would be wise for instructors to tweak or modify assignments and the use of blogs each semester, as circumstances change. Blogging should be an active process, not something that is passively used as an extra assignment. An instructor's decision to use blogs in the classroom should be made carefully. The blog should act as a supplement to the course, something necessary to extend the discussion about a particular topic or a set of topics in the course. This presents students with an opportunity to participate as a member of a virtual group, while maintaining a sense of autonomy.

A future research project on the use of blogs to teach about group processes might go as follows: First, we would use a larger sample to allow for more complex quantitative analyses. To truly test the effects of blog use, over and above more traditional teaching methods, we would use a randomized control group design, where the experimental group would use an online blog as described in this article, whereas the control group would be taught by traditional classroom methods only. Variables on which these two groups could be compared include individual as well as group reflexivity, individual learning progress, satisfaction with the learning experience, and learning transfer beyond the classroom. We would expect all of these outcomes to benefit significantly from the use of an online blog, compared to the use of more traditional classroom methods.

Appendix A

Screen Shot of the Online Blog

14

that fact? In case that person is more bossy than his or her experience obviously justifies, I'd might tell that I (and the rest of the team probably too) feel passed over a little and that I'd like to be included to a greater extent.

Situation 4

As well as to be the one, who asks to slow down in order to prevent groupthink, rash decisions or passing people who have a different opinion or concerns but don´t pipe up for some reason, like Kim K. was once, teams can also appoint someone to be "the Devils Advocate". This person, no matter what his own position toward a topic is, has to argue the unpopular side. When I heard of this method, I found it pretty cool. But when I now think about it and imagine me to be the Devils Advocate, I think it must be very hard to always find something bad about something, isn´t it? Does anybody have experiences with this method? How did it work out? Have you been the Devils Advocate? How was it?

Imagining me in that particular situation would rather be happy to have found a solution in such a short time and not even think about the groupthink-phenomenon or passing someones opinion (in case I´m not the one with concerns). I always think that methods I just heard of make so much sense in order to prevent this or that phenomenon or effect, unfortunately I´m almost never aware of those in the concrete situation.

THURSDAY, APRIL 14, 2011

How I would react... meeting behavior

Meeting behavior one:

I think I would react in the situation rather annoyed and interrupt the

Appendix B

Examples of Coded Blog Entries and Comments

Code	Examples
Introduction blog post	Hi bloggers! I'm *** and I'm a third year PhD student in the communication program. I work full time as an immigration coordinator and help almost 1,000 international students on our campus. Right now I am the main advisor for the students, so it's been a bit overwhelming this semester. I study intercultural communication (go figure) and I'm an avid traveler. Over spring break I was in Peru, and I've been to over 30 countries and 5 continents. I also speak Spanish fluently, some French, Chinese, and understand Portuguese. I hope to do a study on second language acquisition in the near future.
Task-related blog post	Situation 4: From this class I know that we should go back to discussion and continue talking about the problem. However, I admit that I would probably go along with the group. Other factors also might change this situation. How difficult is the project? What are the time constraints? How much do people know about the problem? Maybe group members need to actually try "fixing" the problem before they know enough to discuss it. If I believe the group is working toward the wrong solution, then I would point out errors while tasks are accepted.
Observational blog post	In this post, I hope to discuss my own observations of group exclusion in a homogenous sample. Please comment with your own experiences and opinions of rejection. Also, do you think storytelling could reduce rejection as Sunwolf suggests? [. . .]
Off-topic blog post	Hi all, The other day I was driving around and the song 'Emanuela' from the group Fettes Brot [a contemporary German hip hop band] came on the radio . . . which in and of itself was fortunate because it reminded me I needed to blog this weekend. Is this a fairly popular group in Germany? I only ask because when I was studying German in high school, we were led to believe that Falco [a German singer popular in the 80's] was awesome when, in fact, he hadn't been popular in Germany for ten or fifteen years.
Comments to task-related blog posts	***, great point in situation 6 about profiting from someone with the most experience! I did not think about that myself. If the person has the skills needed to help get the project done, we might as well learn from him or her. Thanks for bringing up that idea.
Comments to observational blog posts	I see your point regarding reactivity and participants in simulators. As one who is working towards a teaching career in communications, what do you think about reactivity in nonsimulator situations?
Off-topic comments	Hi ***, in fact Fettes Brot is quite popular in Germany. Must be a good radio station you're listening to :) Fettes Brot have been around for about 10 years already. I have never been to one of their concerts though but I am sure some of the others have.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

References

Baird, L., Holland, P., & Deacon, S. (1999). Learning from action: Imbedding more learning into the performance fast enough to make a difference. *Organizational Dynamics*, *27*, 19-32. doi:10.1016/S0090-2616(99)90027-X

Bausch, P., Haughey, M., & Hourihan, M. (2002). *We blog: Publishing online with weblogs*. Indianapolis, IN: Wiley Publishing.

Churchill, D. (2009). Educational applications of Web 2.0: Using blogs to support teaching and learning. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *40*, 179-183. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8535.2008.00865.x

Deng, L., & Yuen, A. H. K. (2011). Towards a framework for educational affordances of blogs. *Computers & Education*, *56*, 441-451. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2010.09.005

De Wever, B., Schellens, T., Valcke, M., & Van Keer, H. (2006). Content analysis schemes to analyze transcripts of online asynchronous discussion groups: A review. *Computers & Education*, *46*, 6-28. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2005.04.005

Dyrud, M. A., Worley, R. B., & Flatley, M. E. (2005). Blogging for enhanced teaching and learning. *Business Communication Quarterly*, *68*, 77-80. doi:10.1177/108056990506800111

Eisner, S. P. (2004). Teaching generation Y college students: Three initiatives. *Journal of College Teaching and Learning*, *1*, 69-84.

Hinds, P., Liu, L., & Lyon, J. (2011). Putting the global in global work: An intercultural lens on the practice of cross-national collaboration. *The Academy of Management Annals*, *5*, 135-188. doi:10.1080/19416520.2011.586108

Hofstede, G. J., Pedersen, P. B., & Hofstede, G. (2002). *Exploring culture. Exercises, stories and synthetic cultures*. Boston, MA: Intercultural Press.

Huffman, W. H., & Huffman, A. H. (2012). Beyond basic study skills: The use of technology for success in college. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *28*, 583-590. doi:10.1016/j.chb.201111.004

Kang, I, Bonk, C. J., & Kim, M. -C. (2011). A case study of blog-based learning in Korea: Technology becomes pedagogy. *Internet and Higher Education*, *14*, 227-235. doi:10.1016/j.iheduc.2011.05.002

Kauffeld, S., & Lehmann-Willenbrock, N. (2012). Meetings matter: Effects of work group communication on organizational success. *Small Group Research*, *43*, 128-156. doi:10.1177/1046496411429599

Kauffeld, S., & Meyers, R. A. (2009). Complaint and solution-oriented cycles: Interaction patterns in work group discussions. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *18*, 267-294. doi:10.1080/13594320701693209

Lehmann-Willenbrock, N., Meyers, R. A., Kauffeld, S., Neininger, A., & Henschel, A. (2011). Verbal interaction sequences and group mood: Exploring the role of planning communication. *Small Group Research*, *42*, 639-668. doi:10.1177/1046496411398397

Määttä, E., Järvenoja, H., & Järvelä, S. (2012). Triggers of students' efficacious interaction in collaborative learning situations. *Small Group Research*, *43*, 497-522. doi:10.1177/1046496412437208

Martin, S., Diaz, G., Sancristobal, E., Gil, R., Castro, M., & Peire, J. (2011). New technology trends in education: Seven years of forecasts and convergence. *Computers & Education*, *57*, 1893-1906. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2011.04.003

Moreland, R. L., & McMinn, J. G. (2010). Group reflexivity and performance. In S. R. Thye & E. J. Lawler (Eds.), *Advances in Group Processes* (Vol. 27, pp. 63-95). Bradford, UK: Emerald.

Pena-Shaff, J. B., & Nicholls, C. (2004). Analyzing student interactions and meaning construction in computer bulletin board discussions. *Computers & Education*, *42*, 243-265. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2003.08.003

Richardson, W. (2006). *Blogs, wikis, podcasts, and other powerful web tools for classrooms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Rogelberg, S. G., Leach, D. J., Warr, P. B., & Burnfield, J. L. (2006). "Not another meeting!" Are meeting time demands related to employee well-being? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *91*, 86-96. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.91.1.83

Rogelberg, S. G., Shanock, L. R., & Scott, C. W. (2012). Wasted time and money in meetings: Increasing return on investment. *Small Group Research*, *43*, 236-245. doi: 10.1177/1046496411429170

Wang, K. T., Huang, Y. -M., Jeng, Y. -L., & Wang, T. -I. (2008). A blog-based dynamic learning map. *Computers & Education*, *51*, 262-278. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2007.06.005

West, M. A. (2000). Reflexivity, revolution, and innovation in work teams. In M. Beyerlein, D. Johnson & S. Beyerlein (Eds.), *Product development teams* (pp. 1-29). Stamford, CT: JAI Press.

Williams, J. B., & Jacobs, J. (2004). Exploring the use of blogs as learning spaces in the higher education sector. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, *20*, 232-247.

Author Biographies

Annika L. Meinecke, MSc, is a research associate in the Department of Industrial/ Organizational and Social Psychology at Technische Universität Braunschweig, Germany. Her research interests include dynamic leader–follower interaction processes, methods for interaction analysis, and intercultural differences in team meeting behavior.

Kim K. Smith is a doctoral student in the Department of Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, USA. Her primary research focuses on the influence of technology use on organizational and group communication processes as they relate to self and collective identity formation.

Nale Lehmann-Willenbrock, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Department of Social and Organizational Psychology at VU University Amsterdam, Netherlands. She has published on trust in the workplace, meeting effectiveness, and dynamic behavioral processes in teams. Further research interests include emergent social influence and methodological advances in team interaction analysis.