Behavior in Groups

CS109: Ethical Foundations of Computer Science
February 6, 2018
Groups are fundamental to CS experience

• You will be working and programming in teams at UT and beyond
• Your actions affect others!
• Thus, it is essential that you learn how to behave appropriately in a group
• It’s important to:
  • Your reputation
  • Your fellow group members
  • Society
• Two main pieces:
  • How you act within the group
  • How you act as part of the group
Appropriate or not?

A for yes
B for no
Guidelines for Group Interaction

Consider:

- Behavior within the group
- Behavior as a group
Acting Within a Group

• Arrive prepared and on time
• Pay attention when someone is talking
  • Don’t interrupt
  • If you notice someone within your group being interrupted, speak up
• Pay attention when someone is coding
  • Split driving evenly
  • Don’t grab the keyboard
  • If you’re driving, listen for input
• Keep it professional
  • Maintain personal space (no touching!)
  • Don’t ask your groupmates out (if you insist, wait until the project is over)
Acting as a Group

• Maintain high standards and integrity
  • Watch for rationalizations and group think

• Avoid characterizing people outside the group as “other”
  • Can lead to harm and bullying

• Be inclusive of those inside the group
  • Make sure everyone feels respected and included
Case Study: Perspective of a Group Member

He is a much better programmer than me, and I learned so much from pair programming with him. He taught how to write better code and helped me look for better solutions than the laziest one. He also explained some of the concepts if I didn't entirely understand them.
Case Study: Perspective of a Group Member

I tried to be very friendly and approachable for problems. My schedule this semester has been more hectic than last semester as I have had more family obligations, and often times this caused me to cancel my participation in projects or to meet up late. I am also not a very assertive person, and I greatly dislike confrontation so I rarely attempted to make it known that a partner made me feel uncomfortable or undervalued within the group. If my participation wasn’t wanted, I did not attempt to change that. I fully understood the requirements of each assignment, but during project 3 the only other partner in my group did all the planning, coding, and overall logic behind the implementation. I felt incredibly lost as he did not pace himself or even explain what particular problem he was trying to solve or what he was trying to debug. The time it would have taken for me to understand the entirety of the code he had written and scrapped multiple times would have been too long to get any substantial work done in time for the due date, and I understood this so I rarely asked questions. Which was dumb in retrospect, but I was not going to battle someone who appeared to not respect me or my time during that particular project. On another note, I believe my presence was important during most of the projects, regardless of feeling undervalued. I'm not sure that makes sense, but it's the only way I can phrase how I felt about the project groups this semester.
Case Study: Perspective of a Group Member

I believe I contributed a lot to the overall project success, but for different reasons compared to my team members. As I mentioned in my peer evaluations, one of my group members hindered my ability to contribute ideas to the team planning and coding. Whenever I came up with a good idea, this team member shut me down immediately with no reasoning behind it. Also, for some of the code I wrote, he refused to use it simply because he did not understand my code and did not have any confidence in me, even though our other team member said it was correct and it passed several other tests. Unfortunately, this belittling eventually got the best of me, and it caused me to not be as willing to contribute ideas to the group and to not do as much code on my own. If you write a lot of code that works and one of your team members erases all of it for no reason, it really does lower your confidence. Despite all of this, I believe one of my most important contributions to the team was my positivity and optimism. My group members would get very frustrated and pessimistic whenever we couldn't figure something out and wanted to give up, but I really tried to keep everyone going by staying optimistic and positive and by making everyone else a little more optimistic! This allowed all of us to push ourselves when the projects got hard and kept us going until the deadlines.
One more case study will be offered on the blog posts:

Cyberbullying: Where GroupThink meets technology to cause harm