Break down the stereotype of programmer

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Programmers are often thought as slovenly nerds who spend their days coding in a darkened room and rarely communicate with other people. According to Ensmenger's article, this stereotype began with the computer center in 1970s and and it still has an impact to today's campus and companies. However, programmers should reject the stereotype inhereted from history and seek change actively. Not only does such a stereotype no longer fit today's situation, but also it has a negative impact on the future.

The nerd stereotype doesn't fit today's situation. The stereotype is inherited from 1970s. Computer science was highly academic at that time. Programmers revel in their own territory and not dealing too much with the outside world. However, with the rapid of development of computer science, it started interacting with other domains, such as Banking, education and healthcare. Especially after the invention of the smartphone, different kinds of software are getting closer to people's lives. There is an increasing need for programmers to communicate with other non-technical people to explain their abstract code. Factly, the software development model is evolving continuously to meet the growing need of communication, which is contrary to the stereotype that programmers don't need communicate. Take the agile development model for example, it is a new software development medel that can deal with rapidly changing requirements. Compared with traditional model, it place more emphasis on the programmer team work closely with business experts, face to face communication (think is more effective than a written document), frequent delivery of new software version, compact and self-organizing team, is able to adapt to the demand change of coding and team organization method. [1]

The nerd stereotype will also have negative impact on future. Although computer science is booming and excellent communication skill has become one of the essential abilities of a good programmer nowadays, the future that programmers face is not that positive. Because there are not many channels for programmers to make their voices heard. Most programmers prefer to share information on geek platforms like github, stackoverflow and subreddit rather than traditional platforms, which results in the separation between reality and public perception. People outside the community still hold the old stereotype unless they become one of the "slovenly nerds" actively or passively. The stereotype blocks the younger generation to enter this field, especially females. In 1984, the percentage of women in computer science flattened, and then plunged, even as the [share of women in other technical and professional fields](http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/nsf13327/content.cfm?pub_id=4266&id=2) kept rising. [2] Besides young generation, current programmers may also be hurt by the stereotype. In many poorly managed companies, non-technical managers don't care what the programmers say because the managers also agree with this stereotype and don't trust and respect the voice of programmers. The lack of communication between managers and programmers will lead to the mismatch between the requirements of and the actual project, which results in the failure of whole project. And because the voice is being neglected in long term, programmers will also lose the will to communicate actively. In another word, programmers are cultivated into a nerd by the stereotype.

In conclusion, the stereotype that programmers are slovenly nerds that never communicate with others is against to current situation. The need of communication to different field is growing in computer science and communication skill is become one of the most important skills that programmers need. However, if the stereotype cannot be changed, it will grow stronger and reinforce the separation between reality and public perception. Finally, it will have a negative impact on the future and make current and future programmers to true coding nerds.

References:

[1] NPR. 2014. " When Women Stopped Coding" Last modified October 21, 2014. <https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2014/10/21/357629765/when-women-stopped-coding>

[2] Wikipedia. 2020. “Agile software development”. Last modified 29 May 2020. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agile_software_development>