Team Review and Learning Points

After about a month of working with my team on our Errand Android App Project, I did not have a very good experience in an overall sense. It is difficult to describe what happened without trying to sound one-sided and blaming everyone else for having faults.

Just to go over the tasks that I accomplished, in the project, I implemented a way to query every task from the firebase database to make sure that each task can properly display its information when it is clicked on. This applies to every task within the app. In addition to that, I added a way to delete tasks, and edit individual tasks using an edit button I implemented within the task page. The only way one could access this edit a task is if the task they were adding was of their own. I made impossible for users to edit tasks that they did not own. Finally, to sum it all up, within the myTasks Page, I added a dialog that would allow users once they clicked on a task that they owned, a dialog would appear giving the users an option between deleting the task on the spot, or to view their task.

Now to go over the problems I had with my group and the challenges that I faced. I can say for sure that I have been actively involved in this project since day 1. Since the first day the project was assigned, I organized multiple group meetings to try to organize our group and come up with ideas for our project. I attended every meeting I heard about that my group organized in the slack, and always made time for my group disregarding my busy schedule. I think the point in which our group fell apart was during the first app integration. During this time, a lot of us were busy with projects and midterms to the point where we found it really difficult to find time to work on the project. My fault in that was that I did not take the time to check the slack to see how many commits were being made every day and a lot of the other members left it up to Andrew Henry to finish off the first app integration for us. During the last 4 to 5 days before the first app integration, I came back to the slack and noticed the large amount of commits to the github repository. You see the problem with the slack app is that I never got notified of these commits. I only was notified when I got tagged by someone and at no point was I tagged during the time that so many of these commits were being made except until the very last moment after literally 6000 lines of code had been committed. At this point, I was told to help Andrew develop the app a bit more and find out what needed to be done. As such, I tried to do so, but it was impossible within the little time to understand what each piece of code was doing especially because there were over 20 classes implemented. On top of that, the code that was implemented went beyond what we went over in lecture. For example, I never had any experience with fragments, so I had to learn how they functioned. To learn how a lot of this code was working, as you may have noticed, I attended the extra office hours rather often in order to find out how I could contribute.

By the time the first app integration ended, one person, Andrew, once again, ended up committing 8000 lines of code all by himself, and eventually what ended up happening was that the group ended up being ruled more like a dictatorship rather than actually working together as a group. Andrew’s word essentially became the law and there was no arguing against it. **The work we did was never evenly split up, and random people ended up doing random tasks within the app**. To show that it was a dictatorship, our entire project done on github. If we wanted to commit to master, we would have to make a pull request, and if that pull request did not satisfy with what Andrew wanted, he would not accept it, and our code would be completely rejected like the same way when a hard-working student makes a dissertation after years of work and ends up realizing that his work was thrown into the thrash because it did not meet a simple requirement. We had zero say on what we can implement and what I mean by that is that it was to unreasonable points. For example, one of my pull requests was not accepted because I wanted to have the delete task button be listed on a dialog instead of having it be listed as a menu bar in an already congested activity. I tried to argue my point, but literally Andrew said was “If you choose to implement a dialog, I will not accept your pull request at all.” There was no difference in functionality. It was simply just the looks, and from what I saw having a dialog did not affect the user’s experience at all. My point is, there were instances where Andrew, our acting manager, would act in such a way that we had no say on how we wanted our app to look. Right after the first app integration, the app became Andrew’s property, not ours.

Eventually these arguments built up over time, and my entire group ended up displaying a lot of hatred and disgust towards me. When Andrew assigned me a solid task to complete, I completed it without hesitation or questions, and I described that task in the second paragraph of this paper. Since I felt like the kind of work I was given was small, I added more tasks to the list, all of which I described once again.

I would like to also add that there was a severe amount of miscommunication in the group. One of the parts I would like to bring up was that at one point of time which was actually last Saturday, a day in which all of us got together and worked on the project, I was clearly discussing the project details with them, and I confirmed that our group had basically finished most of the triggers. Our app also looked mostly finished, so I assumed that it was an almost finished product after over 30 thousand plus lines of code had been committed. However, at the very last day when the app was due at around 11:00 PM, my group told me that none of the triggers were finished. In addition, they completely blamed me for not checking the Slack about the meeting at 5 pm they had last night (Monday). So another problem I felt like with this group was that everything was organized on the slack to the point where the slack was so congested that it made it easy to miss meetings. In addition, no one in the group at that time even though they had an emergency meeting at 5 tagged me in the slack asking me to join the meeting. I did not know about the meeting till 11:00 when I was tagged to turn in this paper I am writing right now. Afterwards, all my group members harshly blamed me for not attending the meeting and not being aware about it, but at no point did they ever tag me on the slack about the meeting asking me where I am. The meeting started at 5, and it seems like according to the chat everyone showed up at 6. At no point did these guys ever tag me to ask me to show up, yet they put constant blame on me about the lack of attentiveness I paid to this project when in reality I showed up to every other meeting, and had been trying to be on top of this project since the first day.

All in all, I cannot really blame the group for my shortcomings in the end of the day. If I had been more attentive about the project during the first integration, I am sure that I would have had a much better experience with this group. I also think that if I took the initiative to be a lot more organized with scheduling meetings, and evenly dividing up the work, we would not have had problems in which some of the members including me in our group felt as if we were not contributing as much as we could have to the project. However, being in this team has taught me a lot about how to work in a team in general, and has taught me the consequences of not being initiative and not offering your opinion when you feel as if something does not feel right or that you are not being treated the right way. I have also learned a lot more about android programming in general, and being able to work with multiple different types of database servers in this group such as geofire and activity types such as fragments has become indispensable for me, and am sure this experience will help me greatly in the future. As such if anything else, I am very thankful to the group for providing me with this experience and this new knowledge I have gained.

If I could do something better in the future, I would like what most other groups did, break the projects into parts and assign each person in the group to do their own part as well as put a bit of trust that the others can do it. There was also a great lack of trust in this group, and while I was coding, I always lived under the fear that someone else was already doing my part or was already done with it, and that I would have just been wasting time.

P.S. sorry for making this really long, I just had a lot that I had to say about this group.