Morgan Gangwere  
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Chapter 3  
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Chapter 3 homework

From an early age, several things were engrained into my being by the people around me as the habits I should take on. Out of the list, three stand out in my mind: Cooperation (and competition), work habits, and people who aren’t like me. These three make up what, in my world, is called the Hacker Ethic. The things that are expected of me – appropriate actions, that which is inappropriate – these are loose guides to help be successful as a person in a highly divergent team.

The most important isn’t cooperation or even how well you work, but how you view other people. When I was young, the people that made up the social circles of my parents and friends were diverse; the 90’s brought a wave of people to Silicon Valley who were all kinds of weird to me. As I became more and more adventurous on the internet, I interacted with all sorts of people from all over the place, and it became important to me not what someone looks like or talks like, but their skills. One passage that I regularly found was the words of Richard M. Stallman, a contemporary of many of the people around me:

The hacker ethic refers to the feelings of right and wrong, to the ethical ideas this community of people had—that knowledge should be shared with other people who can benefit from it, and that important resources should be utilized rather than wasted.

This leads me to cooperation. My father worked on lots of different teams, as did many of his friends during the dot-com bubble of the late 90’s and early 2000’s. A sense that all things are collaborative, and that lone wolves rarely make huge things happen was given to me by osmosis. Certainly, I was told that being a part of a team is important, but seeing for myself the effects of collaborative teams that were able to work past differences in style and background made it very meaningful to me

This brings me to my final point: work habits. When I was young, it was not uncommon for my father to be off working until the wee hours of the night, and even to this day, I see much of his life devoted to his work. Later, in my teens, I was shown that a strong work ethic is a thing that you accumulate over time, getting more and more interested in the work that you are truly passionate about. Many of the people around me were taught to work hard and play hard, and I was exposed to much of the early startup culture where teams that would later get purchased by Google or Microsoft would end up working 20 hour days then go hiking because it sounded fun.

These three things shaped me: through countless exposure, much of what I guide my life by has been gained by osmosis, a life lead by example. My mentors and peers have been those who don’t sweat not knowing what is wrong, instead using that as an opportunity to be right. Many of my learned lessons were by failing in the presence of those who would hold me up, a form of collaboration that I engrain into myself to this day. Diversity as a strength, not a challenge, was the guiding principle behind many of the conflicts I encountered. I was accepted on the merit of my words and my skills, not my outward facing appearance, age, or inexperience. This is what has helped define me.