Reflection on Group Thesis

I was first approached about becoming a part of the undergraduate research team for WMU’s BRAIN lab back in fall of 2016. At first, I was a little hesitant about the whole thing and the potential for completing a group Honor’s Thesis. As time went on and we started formulating ideas as well as figuring out how exactly a group thesis would work, I became more excited about the idea. Unlike group projects I had completed before I knew and was close friends with the three other people in the group. I knew the four of us could work well together because we had similar work ethics, were close friends, had worked together before, and we were all very passionate about completing the thesis. However, like most group projects there were going to be things that were difficult. One of the hardest parts for us was keeping our friend life separate from our research and not letting it affect how we felt about each other outside of the research realm.

During this whole process there were times when we did not agree on how something should be done, as well as miscommunications. For most of the project we were all able to agree or easily reach a compromise. If there was a conflict it usually wasn’t between all four of us but just between Megan and I. Sometimes these conflicts were a result of miscommunication while other times they were a result of both of us being stressed about other life situations. However, most of the time we were both talking about the exact same thing but were just saying it different ways. Once we figured out we were talking about the same thing we were able to resolve the issue and move onto something else. Even though that happened a couple of times there were other times when we both believed what we were saying was the correct way to do something and being two headstrong individuals, it was hard for us to reach a compromise. Being in a group of four also
made it difficult for tie breakers because usually two people agreed to do it one way why the other two wanted to do it a different way. When this happened we usually tabled the idea and came back to it later.

When conflicts arose, we were all able to handle ourselves in a mature and professional way but found it hard to not let it affect our friendships. There were times when Megan and I disagreed on something and I did not want to talk to her for days afterwards, but for the most part, we were both able keep our friendship separate from our thesis problems. Usually if we were not getting anywhere with the issues and not being productive, we would call it a night and then find a different time to meet when we were all fresh and had a moment to collect ourselves. To be completely honest there were a couple of times when I walked away from a late-night meeting wondering how I was going to talk to these people the next day, especially Megan. Usually, after a night away from each other and worrying about other things we were all able to come back together with new ideas, attitudes, and still be friends.

Even though there were some bumps in the road during the process, I thought it was an overall great experience. I was able to work with four of my closest friends and colleagues as well as gain valuable research experience that will be helpful in my future endeavors. Through this entire process I learned when to be a leader, when to be a follower, how to keep friendships separate from work, how to complete research, and how to handle professional conflict resolution. If I was given the opportunity to do the whole thing over again I would. Even though the journey was not the smoothest, I still learned a great deal and gained valuable skills that will be beneficial for me not only on a professional level but on a personal level as well.