# INLS 161 Assignment 3

## Community Event Description

Code: Debugging the Gender Gap is talking about reasons why there is a hiring gap in software engineering. Women are hired less than men are. The filmmaker, Robin Hauser Reynolds, uses the film to describe reasons why this hiring gap exists and what the root problems are. In this class, we are learning about information literacy and gaining information technology skills. The film describes how having classes like ours is important for bridging the hiring gap. Making our class an inclusive environment helps everyone feel more comfortable asking questions and understanding the material. In the panel discussion after the film screening, Robin described difficulties that her daughter was having when she took a computer science class. Her daughter was one of very few women in the class and thought she was failing the whole time, even though she was doing quite well. One thing that I noticed right away about this class, compared to other computer science classes I have taken, is that it's a very open environment, where people are free to make mistakes, learn from them, and talk about them. There's no pressure about what you should have prior knowledge about. The film discussed women who started coding in college, rather than being the ten-year-old coder who already understands how everything works. There are a lot of people in computer science classes at UNC who fit this model. With the clear divide between people who already know how to code before they take introductory classes and people who are just starting out, it makes it difficult to have an equal playing field. In this case, an equal playing field would be one in which people don't feel like Robin's daughter did in her first class.

The film screening described the history of women in computer science, the stigmas about women from then on, the problems women are facing today, and some of the cultural problems that influenced this issue. It began by discussing how women were tasked with coding computers. At that time, people thought that men should construct computers because that would be the harder job, and women would just be tasked with coding human commands into assembly language. It turned out that this process involved lengthy pipelines and was not as easy as engineers thought it would be. It then talked about Grace Hopper and her impact on the field. She was a Navy Rear Admiral who was awarded the first Computer Science Man of the Year award. When asked in an interview if society has made it in computers, she responded that the process has only just begun.

After describing history, the film showed how boys and girls are treated differently from childhood onwards. Boys had toys like construction units that could be used to build things and foster engineering capabilities. Girls had dollhouses and play kitchens that would not encourage them to create anything. There are a few companies now who focus on bringing equal opportunities to girls like GoldieBlox. GoldieBlox's main goal is to create toys and entertainment for

girls that will develop interest in engineering. The film completed this segment by talking about a few other companies that also had similar goals and then continued to discuss problems women face today.

Aside from problems getting a degree in computer science, women in the field also struggle with being in a male-dominated field. One woman talked about how she left her job because her coworkers were not taking her ideas into account and were continuously objectifying women. After she left her job, she got death threats and her former coworkers made a meme out of one of her photos and wrote derogatory terms on it. She is not the only women who has faced these problems. Another executive asked how she could encourage women to delve into the computer science field knowing that prospective female software engineers will always have to struggle to prove that they are just as good, if not better, than their male counterparts. From this film, I understood that getting involved in any of the technology fields will be an uphill battle for women, and there are many reasons for this, detailed in the film. I also understood that it is important to know about all of the facets of this issue. When I was unaware that this is commonplace in computer science, I felt like Robin's daughter did when I first started coding. It's interesting to hear that America is behind many other countries who already understand how many potential job opportunities there will be in information technology and that women and men need to fill those positions.

## Upcoming INLS Events

| Name | Date | Location |
|------|------|----------|
| Duncan-Lowry Deanship Celebration | 10/27/2016 | Manning Hall Lobby |
| Study Abroad and Your Career | 11/01/2016 | Manning Hall 208 |
| Tutorial on BitCurator Environment and BitCurator Access Tools | 11/04/2016 | Manning Hall 117 |

## A Few Coding Quotes

*"Everybody in this country should learn to program a computer... because it teaches you how to think."* **-Steve Jobs**

*"All of my friends who have younger siblings who are going to college or high school - my number one piece of advice is: You should learn how to program."* **-Mark Zuckerburg**

Figure 1: Fun Coding Image