Matthew Isaac

A01515095

Book Lab Reflection

Book: *Homegoing*

Professor: Marissa Vigneault

Since I am reaching the end of my undergraduate education, my last few semester have been filled with coursework that is directly related to my major and minors (statistics and computer science). Participating in this book lab and reading *Homegoing* was a wonderful experience that helped me to think critically about a different set of ideas than I have been exposed to recently.

Interacting this closely with students studying other subjects was extremely beneficial to our discussions. I learned a lot from each of them and better understood what the author was communicating through various passages. I also came to understand how ideas in to book could be approached differently from different disciplines. The variety of disciplines in our book lab helped me to think more deeply about the book.

I noticed a large contrast between what I have been studying in my classes and what we discussed in our book lab meetings. In statistics and computer science, there is usually a “right” answer – some solution that is correct. Additionally, we usually can tell when we reach that solution. For the issues we discussed in the book lab, I realized that sometimes there is no “right” answer – or sometimes no answer at all! This bothered me at first, and I found some of the discussions we had to be a little unsatisfying because at the end of them I didn’t feel like we’d made any real progress on solving the issue we had been talking about.

There was one week that this particularly bothered me. We had been discussing the cycle of poor education among the lower social classes. We talked about how education is a massive game changer for socio-economic status. If the parents don’t have good educations, the probability of their children getting good educations is much lower. Dr. Vigneault shared how her husband was a school teacher and taught in an elementary school in inner city Pittsburg. She said that the school district had given him one box of pencils and one ream of paper for school supplies for his classroom. A few year later, he had gotten a job teaching in a suburb of Pittsburg where there were some very wealthy neighborhoods. This time, his classroom was loaded with supplies, paper, crayons, and pencils. To top it off, each student had an iPad that they used for educational purposes. The educations that were given to these two groups of students were vastly different, even in elementary school. As we discussed and thought about this issue, we realized that although no one is discriminating against the children in the inner city directly based on their race, there is a sort of inequality existing between the mostly white children attending the “wealthier” elementary school and the mostly black children attending the elementary school in the inner city. I kept thinking about the discussion we had about this issue for a few days after the book lab. What bothered me the most was that although we had discussed this massive problem that exists in our world, we were no closer to finding a solution. Four students in a book lab in northern Utah can hardly change school policies in Pittsburg.

After putting a fair amount of thought into this issue, I came to a few realizations. First, I realized that there might not be one “correct” solution to the issue of inequality in education. I also realized that although I can’t do much to help children in Pittsburg, there may be things I can do here in our community to help those who haven’t had a fair shot at life. One of the other students mentioned how refugees that are present in our community are a minority who need help. I realized that there are many people in our community who are struggling in one way or another. There are likely people in many of my classes who are struggling emotionally, financially, mentally, or otherwise. This book lab has left me with a new resolve to open my eyes more to people around me who are struggling in some way and to do something to alleviate their suffering.