

CODE: Debugging the Gender Gap
Director's Statement

Early one morning in the spring of 2013, my daughter called home from college announcing she intended to drop her computer science major. "I'm really bad at it," she says. "I'm the worst in the class; I don't fit in." Her confidence was shaken by being one of just two women in a class of 25, and by not having the resources or the role models to support her. After taking four computer science classes, she drops the CS major. As it turns out, she was earning a B.

That same spring, weekly headlines in national newspapers declared the importance of attaining some level of computer science knowledge in college. Want a job out of college? Study computer science. A White House study stated that by 2020 there would be 1 million unfilled computer science jobs in the USA. What is going on here? With tech jobs plentiful and lucrative, why is the supply / demand ratio so skewed? Well, the tech industry is missing half the population.

Together with Producer Staci Hartman, I set out to debug the reasons behind the gender gap and digital divide. For the most part, Silicon Valley availed itself to our inquisition, and with each interview - whether at Yelp, Facebook, Google, Twitter, Pinterest, Strava, Pandora, GitHub or Pivotal, we learned that the underlying currents which dissuaded women and people of color from pursuing coding jobs and resulted in the dearth of minorities in tech, were systemic, pervasive, and complex. Mindsets, stereotypes, clogs in the educational pipeline, startup culture, lack of role models and sexism all play important roles in this mounting gender, ethnic and economic issue.

Professor Claude Steele says it takes about a generation to change a stereotype. As director of CODE: Debugging the Gender Gap, I hope to inspire our audience to begin that change. Change in the way our school system values computer science education; change in the way we think of a programmer; change in the way women and people of color view themselves in the tech field.

Robin Hauser Reynolds
Director / Producer