Why Stereotypes?

They do exist.

Many of us believe we have control over whether or not we stereotype. Research has shown that this isn't always the case. Stereotypes are often:

- Automatic
- Outside of our awareness
- Unintentional
- In conflict with our conscious beliefs

Because biases are not consciously controlled, it is important to develop ways to combat stereotypes.

Why address them?

Stereotypes about academic fields prevent many students from pursuing these fields. Some of the benefits of pursuing a career in computer science include:

- It's rated among the best jobs in the U.S.
- Provides opportunities to improve society by designing products that help people
- High status and lucrative salaries
- Potential for flexible hours
- Work is dynamic and challenging

Computer science is an exciting and important field with the potential to attract more people if we acknowledge the truth beyond the stereotype.

> "People are missing out on well-respected, influential and flexible careers [in computer science]"
>
> **Kalwarski, Mosher, Paskin, and Rosato (2007)**

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Debunking Stereotypes

Changing the image of computer science

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Stereotype #1:

All computer scientists are nerds.

The truth is:

Computer scientists are **independent thinkers whose interests go beyond computers**. They change the world with their ideas and intellect.

Marissa Mayer (shown above) is Vice President of consumer products at Google. She graduated from Stanford with an M.S. in computer science specializing in artificial intelligence. Marissa is renowned for style and has been featured in fashion magazines, including *Vogue*.

David J. Malan (shown above) is a professor of Computer Science at Harvard. He was at one time a forensics investigator and volunteers his time as an EMT for the Red Cross.

Stereotype #2:

Computer science material is boring and hard to learn.

The truth is:

Computer science involves creative problem-solving which keeps the work rewarding. **It's about being creative, using your imagination and having fun.** Think about all the cool things computer scientists have been responsible for creating: iPhone apps, 3-D movies and YouTube to name just a few. The possibilities for computer scientists are endless, and their potential impact is huge.

Computer scientists get to work with smart and inspiring people in and out of the field, such as designers, architects, doctors and entrepreneurs. They often do field work gives them the opportunity to travel all around the world to new and exciting places.

"Computer science is no more about computers than astronomy is about telescopes."

Edsger Dijkstra, computer scientist

Stereotype #3:

Computer science environments are bland.

The truth is:

Computer science departments and companies receive a lot of funding, much of which is used to create **comfortable, fun and interesting environments**.

The Paul G. Allen Center for Computer Science and Engineering at the University of Washington has many features that make it a great place to study. Inviting computer labs and study areas are designed to encourage teamwork and collaboration. Balconies on the top floor (shown above) and an ultra modern conference room overlook all of Lake Washington.

Companies such as Microsoft and Google spend a lot of money improving their employees' workspaces. For example Google provides its engineers with free on-site lunches, hair cuts, doctor's visits and even laundry service.