

Women in Business and Technology

Transcript of Episode 033 - Incorporating Inclusion Riders with Annenberg Inclusion Initiative Founder Dr. Stacy Smith

Guests: Dr. Stacy Smith, Kristin Carr and Brianna Roberts

Summary: Colleen shares a debrief on her experience enrolling in a Dale Carnegie Immersion Seminar. Sonia connects with Microsoft employees Kristin Carr and Brianna Roberts about Returnity, a program to support mothers reentering the workplace. Colleen interviews Dr. Stacy Smith, the founder and director of the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative and the originator of the concept of an inclusion rider. Our hosts take a look at how brands celebrated International Day of the Girl.

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SONIA DARA: Welcome to Episode 33 of Women in Business and Technology. I'm Sonia Dara.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And I'm Colleen O'Brien

SONIA DARA: In this episode's Community Connect segment, I sat down with Kristin Carr and Brianna Roberts, two Program Manager Leads in the Windows organization here at Microsoft. These women are on a mission to make the transition back from maternity leave easier.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And then you'll hear my interview with Stacy Smith, an Associate Professor at the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. Smith is the founder and Director of the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, and the originator of the concept of an inclusion rider, a contract clause that actors can demand that requires film cast and crew to meet a certain level of diversity. You may have heard of this concept in Frances McDormand's Academy Awards acceptance speech this past spring, and we will dive into that more.

SONIA DARA: Then we'll wrap up the show with a look at how some brands celebrated International Day of the Girl. There are a couple of amazing campaigns that popped up around the moment, and we're excited to take a closer look at those

But before we jump in, let's do a little catch-up. Colleen, what's going on in life, anything new?

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yeah. I recently went through the Dale Carnegie Immersion Seminar on Effective Communications and Human Relations.

This training is based on two of Dale Carnegie's best-known books, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*; you've probably heard of that one, and *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*. And I actually never read either of these books, so it was a good forcing function for me to get on my to-do list and read some of those books that I wanted to read. It was a three-day program, eight hours a day, and I trained with about 25 women in this program.

SONIA DARA: Awesome.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And everything was really based on the principles that Dale Carnegie talks about in these books. And they seem pretty straightforward, give honest and sincere appreciation, become genuinely interested in other people, show respect for other's opinions, you know, these things that seem pretty straightforward.

SONIA DARA: Pretty straightforward but, yeah, get lost.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yeah, when you get caught up in the work environment, these are sometimes the things that trickle away when you're trying to stay productive and keep going in the workplace.

So this training was a really great time for me to think about my narrative and the stories that I have and really challenge me to do a lot of public speaking and get up and share those stories with everyone. There were some pretty vulnerable moments when everyone is telling funny stories or stories where they learned a lesson.

So I would very much recommend this program if you are looking to hone your presentation skills or really if you need to take a step back from work and shake yourself out of the day-to-day rut. So for more information about the training just head to DaleCarnegie.com to learn more.

SONIA DARA: Nice.

In this episode of Community Connect, we're going to learn more about Returnity, a program at Microsoft designed to support new moms returning from maternity leave.

I sat down with Kristin Carr, a Program Manager lead of Windows Audio and Brianna Roberts, a Program Manager lead focused on documentation and learning experiences within the engineering system. These two people helped facilitate this entire program.

Carr explained the origin story of this initiative to support new moms.

KRISTIN CARR: For me, you know, I've had three babies. So I've got three young children. I've gone on three maternity leaves at Microsoft, which means that I've come back from maternity leave three times. And so each time I came back from maternity

leave I really struggled. It was really, really, really hard for me. But I also felt like I got really lucky because each time there was a relatively senior woman in my organization who kind of noticed that I was struggling and kind of took it upon herself to sort of pull me aside, chat with me, help me make different work arrangements that allowed me to be both a happy mom and a productive employee.

One of the things that happened recently before we ended up actually starting this program was, you know, I had heard about a friend of a friend, actually, who had come back from maternity leave and eventually ended up leaving Microsoft and not sticking around. And that experience and hearing about that made me think, geez, you know, I feel like I got really lucky in getting the support that I need, but I feel like women shouldn't have to get lucky to do that, to have that support.

SONIA DARA: Roberts is passionate about providing women with the foundation and support system to transition back into the workplace after an extended leave.

BRIANNA ROBERTS: We think that really any woman, the second that they walk back in the door, they're committed to being here and we wanted to set women up for a successful reentry into their roles, into their teams, into their careers, and it was hard for both of us and quite frankly probably the hardest year-and-a-half right after I got back and everything is changing. And sometimes you don't know who to talk to, and if you had this immediate network of women to learn from and you see an example of like, okay, it's doable, it's empowering to keep you motivated to be a happy mom and a productive employee.

SONIA DARA: Carr shared some of the physical challenges that motherhood and the transition back to work presents.

KRISTIN CARR: You've got a brand-new baby, and so you haven't slept for probably about six months. You haven't physically recovered from having a baby, because research shows that you actually need about a year to physically recover from having a baby. And then all of a sudden, you're trying to shuttle a kid to daycare and you're trying to deal with bottles and pumping at work and the baby doesn't want to take that bottle. And you're trying to dart away to the new mother's room a couple times a day to pump. And so you've got fewer hours that you can actually spend physically at work, but you've got just like a million more things on your mind. And so juggling that, it's hard. It's not impossible but it's very easy for it to feel like it's impossible.

And so what we try to do is kind of bridge the gap from feeling impossible to, hey, here are like some tools, tips, tricks, support to turn that into being doable.

SONIA DARA: Roberts explained that her new normal as a parent at work includes fierce and ongoing prioritization of how she's spending her time.

BRIANNA ROBERTS: You want to put boundaries in place with your time. That's your most finite resource and so it's hard sometimes when I need to go do pick up, but I won't let myself feel bad about leaving at that time and not staying late, or not getting in super early anymore. And so you're choosing to make different things a priority. It never feels like there's enough time to do everything you want to do an everything you need to do. And it's definitely a challenge to leave at the end of the day and feel like you didn't accomplish as much at work. And I will say all of our participants are just laser-focused on this I want to continue to have impact and yet I feel very torn on where my time goes.

SONIA DARA: Carr shed light on the specific ways that Returnity comes to life.

KRISTIN CARR: We sort of formed a community of support for new moms by hosting monthly lunches where we talk about a different topic each month. And then the second way is we provide one-on-one pairing with an experienced new mom mentor.

SONIA DARA: Roberts explained that the Returnity network provides great exposure to other women who want to be present as a parent and have a career.

BRIANNA ROBERTS: I love the expression, you can't be what you can't see. So actually Kristin was one of the first people I met back from my first maternity leave. It was so inspiring to see someone who had been through it continue to grow in her career. So I think that's what we're offering.

SONIA DARA: Listeners, if your company doesn't have a great support system in place for parents returning to work, there's a strong business case for allocating resources to an initiative like this. Roberts hits us with the headlines:

BRIANNA ROBERTS: It's over half of women leave the tech industry at this midlevel in their careers, which is twice the rate of men, it's 56 percent. So that's at that point. And it typically coincides with the time that women are choosing to have families. And so it is a really critical and pivotal timeframe. So it's not just about recruiting, it's companies retaining and then advancing qualified women so that we have best pipeline. And these women, they're back in the door and they're ready to be here. And so I think that's why it's very critical for companies like Microsoft to support programs like this.

SONIA DARA: Since recording this interview several Returnity programs have popped up at Microsoft. And many support parents regardless of their gender identity. Parental leave looks different depending on the country that you live in or the company that you work for. Regardless of governmental or company investments there are many ways that we can help parents in their transition back to work. Whether you're a people manager or a new parent looking to share your story, assess your sphere of influence and figure out how you can best support parents.

And now let's get on with the interview

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: I am thrilled to welcome to the studio USC Annenberg Associate Professor, and the Founder and Director of the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, Dr. Stacy Smith.

Stacy, welcome to the show.

STACY SMITH: It's great to be here.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: The Annenberg Inclusion Initiative is, of course, the leading think tank in the world studying diversity and inclusion in entertainment through original research and sponsored projects. Can you share more about the work of the organization?

STACY SMITH: Sure. We started doing work in this area back in 2005 and I think the initiative was birthed somewhere around 2008, 2009. And we really work in a couple of different areas. We look at who is on screen. And we take an intersectional approach, focusing on gender, race, ethnicity, LGBT, people with disabilities, how are they shown, when are they shown, when are they erased from storytelling? We're also interested in who is working behind the camera, particularly by gender and race in film. What sells is another focus of our work. And we're also interested in solutions for change.

And so depending on the question, depending on the focus, depending on the sponsorship, we can be working in any or all of those arenas at the initiative. And I think it's a vibrant place. It moves fast. And we work with about 100 undergrads a year. So we have a pretty diverse and nimble team and have a lot of fun at the same time, too.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Stacy, what motivated your interest in this space of representation and equity in front of and behind the camera?

STACY SMITH: That's great question. My background is really in the media violence arena. And so, we've been doing work from the time I finish up my Ph.D. all the way through about 2005 thinking about issues of the way in which media violence was presented in film and television, elements of stories that might elicit fear, particularly in news content.

And so in 2005 I received a call from a group that was starting to explore some of these issues. And ask me if I'd like to do a study on gender in children's media. And I was a bit surprised that there was still a problem at that point in time historically.

And actually it was my dean who suggested at the time, Jeffrey Cowan (ph), you might want to look at movies. And so we included movies, G-rated films, and children's television content. And the thing that I think surprised me the most was the interest

that our students had on issues of identity and inclusion. USC is very diverse and we have students from so many different backgrounds, domestically and internationally, and this really seemed to be the issue that fired them up, that they were passionate about.

And I think that that enthusiasm caught fire and after we finished our first study, I wrote down a series of studies that I wanted to accomplish over the next several years and we're working on the last study that was written down on that piece of paper right now.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Wow.

STACY SMITH: And so it's been quite a journey and we've learned a lot and I think that we've really found something that not only resonates with our team and with our students, but with the large community that have been champions and advocates of our work. And so I've just made a decision, we're going to stay in the game until we change it. So, we'll keep doing work in this vein and rolling out solutions for change until that needle moves.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yeah. I think that any high school hopefuls planning to go to college right now are going to listen in to this and think all professors are as attentive to their students' interests as you are. I think USC just recruited some potentially new students there.

STACY SMITH: Well, we hear every now and again when people write this in their college essay, write about the research and I think that's always a heart-warming feeling for us that it's not just Hollywood elites that are reading what we do. But it is not only affecting consumers, but the next generation, importantly, who want to change this.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right.

STACY SMITH: And so that whenever we hear that somebody has written about this in a college essay, I think we feel like our job, it's a feeling that's just unbelievably powerful.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Absolutely. In your February 2017 TED Talk, The Data Behind Hollywood Sexism, you described the inclusion crisis in Hollywood. What are some of the stats that you've examined when it comes to on-screen representation?

STACY SMITH: Sure. We look at the portrayal of gender and as I mentioned in a couple of talks that I've been doing while I'm up here in the area is that less than a third of all speaking characters in film are girls and women. That number really hasn't changed. If we think about issues of inclusion and who is on-screen, if females are clocking in at less than a third when we think about how women from different communities, or different groups are doing we can understand that it's not simply enough to look at gender.

When we intersect gender and race, or gender with other backgrounds and perspectives we really see an epidemic of invisibility facing women on screen in Hollywood.

Last year across the top 100 films 43 didn't feature a single black girl or woman on screen speaking, out of 100; 65 were completely devoid of Asians, or Asian-Americans; 64 didn't feature a single Latina on screen speaking, not one; and 94 were completely devoid of any women from the LGBT community.

So there's a real epidemic of invisibility facing women from different groups. If those numbers aren't sobering enough to cause individuals to as consumers rise up and ask for more, I don't know what will, because those statistics are extraordinarily problematic. And some of those we rolled out in a TED Talk for the first time a few years ago.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right and are those on-screen realities echoed behind the camera, as well?

STACY SMITH: Far worse, let me give you two data points. So across 1,000 films 1,223 directors, only 4 percent are women, 4 percent. But of those 4 percent only eight are women of color. Four black women; three Asian women, but it's actually only two, because one woman worked twice, and only one Latina. And if you only have one Latina across 1,100 films, I don't think anyone can debate this is an exclusionary hiring problem of epic proportions.

The only thing worse than being a female director, in terms of hiring in Hollywood is being a female composer. Female composers are clocking in at less than 2 percent of all jobs. I think it's closer to actually 1 percent. And so we really see some of these top leadership positions just women aren't considered for those occupational opportunities and it's a real tragedy, because if you are more diverse behind the camera it has the ability to directly impact the stories that are being shown.

We know from other research that we've done with Lunafest and with the Sundance Institute and Women In Film, when you have a female director you have more girls and women on screen, more girls and women in the lead, more racial and ethnic diversity on screen, more women 40 years of age or older. And like I always say, that's good news for someone like me, if I want to see myself on screen. And women are more likely to be considered in other key production roles behind the camera. So changing this one top leadership position has cascading effects for not only what we see on screen, but who is hired behind the camera, as well.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right. So there is hope there. You've done some research on the portrayal of computer science in film and television. Can you share more about how the field that empowers so many to work here at Microsoft is portrayed in the media?

STACY SMITH: I think we still see few women, few people of color, a real lack of diversity and inclusion in storytelling. We often see characters painted in a very stereotypical light, which is quite problematic in terms of we know from research when we see stereotypical role models, particularly in the computer science space, it's communicating to young women a real lack of belonging, a real lack of fit. And almost if she can see it, she won't want to be it. And that's what some of the ambient belonging research is showing that when you have stereotypical objects and artifacts and clothing on actors, or in the social experience, these things can decrease female's interest and desire to pursue computer science academically.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right.

STACY SMITH: And so I think it's an area where a lot of work needs to be done and one that we really need to think about how do we change this so that we change STEM careers over time and make sure that that pipeline is as diverse as the world we live in.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right, that representation is something that really inspired us to create this show. Again, our platform is growing, small but might right now. But we have been able to tell really fantastic stories by just having guests who have overcome being underrepresented in tech, but still building a really great career. It has been such an honor to promote those stories.

There are a few films that have been very widely celebrated for their representation lately, including Black Panther, which featured a predominantly black and African-American cast, and Crazy Rich Asians, which featured an all-Asian cast. Are these milestone films indicative of any sort of trend toward greater representation or are they just tent poles?

STACY SMITH: You know, two is never a trend, right. And we can add to it Wonder Woman and Girl's Trip, and a few others along the way. And really, I think what we're needing to talk about is are the way in which green lighting decisions changing in Hollywood and sadly when it comes to film there's really no evidence that there has or will be change. So a lot of our on-screen and behind the camera stats for 2017, we've looked ahead for 2018, the female director statistics probably are not going to change. So my best educated guess for on-screen is that we'll be status quo in 2018. And so I think the bigger hope is will financial decisions on which films to back in 2019 and 2020 change as a function of some of these high-profile successes.

I think we can always be hopeful. But the bottom line is until the decision-making capabilities of these companies change and the diversity of the teams making the decisions change, I just think that these are a couple of really high profile financially lucrative films that just like other times in Hollywood something will do really, really well and it won't be replicated. It will be written off as -- other stories still present the same level of risk.

So we need more sophisticated financial models to really challenge some of the ways in which folks at these studios are making decisions. So we did a smaller study of films back in 2010 and the films were from 2007 in that investigation. So what we're doing with women in film is really looking across 1,100 movies to see what factors drive financial performance and does the gender of the lead character matter and does the underrepresented status of the lead character, how does this affect box office performance or return on investment.

And these models will hopefully be able to be taken to the studios and say here's what we found, share with us what you found and how does this counter the way in which people have mythologized about what is financially lucrative, particularly internationally.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: In March of this year Frances McDormand referenced your work by encouraging the audience to consider an inclusion rider, or an equity clause. Can you share more about what an inclusion rider is and what the principles are of an inclusion rider?

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Sure, the inclusion rider was something that came to me when I was working in my office one day thinking about how can an A-lister use their contract to make demands on behalf of individuals who aren't getting work? And so the early iterations of this were really asking A-listers to think through in supporting or small roles on screen, how could they use their weight when it comes to casting and auditioning to make sure that gender, race, ethnicity, LGBT, people with disabilities are considered, are auditioned for these smaller, supporting roles on screen.

And then we worked with a whole team of people, whether it's my team or folks that are on our board to create the actual language based on these ideas where we can specify in the auditioning process the consideration of talent that has been historically underrepresented for a very long time, particularly in the film industry, that they be considered and then we extended it to below the line positions, as well, that in key gate keeping positions women and people of color would have to be considered for those positions when crewing up.

So the principles are very straightforward. I mean these are just principles of how do you think strategically about building a diverse candidate pool and interviewing members of that diverse candidate pool and usually in kind of going through those steps you increase the likelihood of hiring diversity and inclusion in particular positions of influence. That's pretty much it. It's a very simple and straightforward approach and it was really an idea that I thought if I can get an A-lister to sign on and we can show that it works, right, then companies might want to sign on to think about how they can crew-up a film or cast a film differently.

Well, sure enough, I mean just a week and a half ago Warner Media now has an entire policy, thanks to the leadership of Michael B. Jordan, of thinking differently about how to hire on-screen and behind the camera. They ran with the idea. Michael B. Jordan at the forefront, I mean his whole team really brought into being something that I think was our wildest dreams. And so I think it's really important to say everybody's ideas matter. And really listening and ensuring that all folks get a chance to contribute and never dismiss a crazy idea, because it might just find its way onto the stage at the Academy Awards, at the Dolby Theater and let's make change a reality.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: How do we recruit more Frances McDormands and Michael B. Jordans to this initiative?

STACY SMITH: I think right now if you look to Time's Up and what's going on in the industry you have a just unbelievable explosion of people in all aspects, top to bottom, all different facets of the industry coming forward with an intersectional focus of wanting to create change. And so in Hollywood we've actually seen something really unbelievably powerful of women coming together from diverse backgrounds to really say we need to stand and create change together from the C-suite all the way down to the mailroom, across production companies and on-set.

And so for us it's really been an area where we've learned a lot. And I think not too long ago I presented the inclusion rider idea to WME and within six minutes Aria Emanuel said yes, let's do this. And allies are everywhere, right. And I think being able to not only persuasively argue why this is important, but give them a tangible solution that's actionable, check back in with them, help them measure the strengths and weaknesses of the solution, make suggestions moving forward for change, and giving them the ability to have a map to get them to where they need to go, that's the key, right. We can't just expect these folks to change, or for companies to come on board, but in working with them with a targeted solution for their particular organizational structure I think advocates are everywhere.

The question that we often hear the most is how do we do it. What specific steps do we need to take? And that's important, because we need to be on the ready to help those companies that want to move forward, but may actually be fearful or just not knowledgeable of how to do that.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right. I have worked in marketing and communications for several years now and one of the most important principles of my work is putting content in front of people. If we're sitting in a room and just coming up with ideas we won't get nearly as far as having something specific to react to. So I very much commend you on going into those executive suites with that roadmap.

STACY SMITH: And sometimes it requires quite a bit of humility, because, we joke about this on my team, it's always easier to react to something than to come up with

the idea yourself. So you have to put on your armor and go in and say, this idea might be ripped to shreds and that's okay, because it's so much easier to kind of rip apart an idea that's in front of you. And the goal is really the conversation around the idea and the synergy and the way forward that's created in that reaction.

But sometimes there's some humility and you have to brace yourself sometimes to be prepared for not just a no but hearing that your ideas may not be well thought through or half-baked or what do you do in this situation. And we really went through a lot of that with the inclusion rider. And I'll give credit to so many folks that we worked with gave us feedback, and what do you do here, and this won't work because, and those conversations only made the process stronger. And it's a growth experience. You really learn and you, I think, develop a little thicker skin to get through the process.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yes. I'm very familiar with that humility. My personal philosophy has been to stay passionate, not precious.

STACY SMITH: Exactly.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: I can't be precious about my work because other people will help me make it better.

STACY SMITH: Right.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission collected data in 2014 from the high-tech sector that demonstrated that the industry is: a) hiring a larger share of white and Asian American men and a smaller share of African Americans, Hispanics and women; b) that white people are represented at a higher rate in the executive category at 83 percent; and c) of those in the executive category about 80 percent are men.

The entertainment and tech industry see some similar representation trends, as you mentioned. How can we leverage what you have learned and the work that your team is doing to start to see a change in the tide in the tech industry?

STACY SMITH: Sure. And I think the one thing that we did probably is starting back in 2012, we did this really interesting project with women in film in Sundance. And we really turned the corner on our team, because we would read statistics like that every year in the entertainment industry and see no change. And we started looking at financial services and seeing the lack of women in VC, and the tech industry and the lack of women and people of color participating or being brought on into job, and it became very frustrating.

And so Dr. Katherine Pieper and myself started looking to the literature. And what we had found in the literature is this robust understanding of the mechanisms that drive

inequality. So it's really great to kind of come up with the buzzwords about the benefits of this or the assets associated with that and trying to always push the economic argument for everything, but what we discovered is that there's a real lack of understanding of these principles that are driving the lack of inclusion and giving qualified and available talent opportunity.

And so what I think that, if I could encourage anybody to do, it's to get up to speed actually on the academic literature that drives inequality. People have been studying this for decades. We need to stand on the shoulders of those giants, because they actually know what they're talking about. People like Alice Eagly at Northwestern, the work on stereotype threat, the work on ambient belonging, the work on social dominance orientation, these are all mechanisms that can help us understand cognitively, psychological characteristics, environments, and the ways in which diversity and inclusion really falls prey to systemic biases that are either implicit or explicit in nature.

And so a lot of folks like to quote stats, and I think we learned the power is in creating solutions around these mechanisms that drive inequality. And it's just like anything else, reading all that literature takes time, it can be a bit dry, arduous to get through, but that's where the answer is, because once you can understand what's driving it then you can figure out solutions that have either been tested already empirically, or you can come up with new solutions and test them and then roll them out to companies.

We don't see a lot of people doing that, and that's the way forward.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: I just want to make sure that I'm understanding you correctly, because I personally witnessed this as the concept of diversity and inclusion becomes more important to different industries, it seems like they need to recreate the wheel of how to think about diversity and inclusion. And I think it's such good advice to look to the think tanks, the thought leaders who have already spent the time doing the empirical research on these matters instead of trying to solve the problem from scratch.

STACY SMITH: Absolutely. I mean, it makes no sense, it's a waste of time and it's a waste of money. Let me give you an example of exactly how this works.

So everyone likes to bow at the altar of implicit bias, and in Hollywood it's a lot of explicit bias that drives lack of inclusion. But there is a place where implicit bias thrives, and that's in smaller roles on screen in film. And so the inclusion rider is really a solution to counter implicit bias in casting on screen. It's a specific solution that causes casting directors, who are primarily white women I would argue, it causes them to confront the bias that might exist on the page.

What do I mean by that? You're reading the script and you see the word "police officer" so you go to your data bank of people and you bring in actors, let's say, that are white

men to read for the role of police officer. You might have firefighter. So you pull a group of men to come in and read for firefighter. You might have plumber, you bring in a group of white men to read. The bias is occupations are often tied to gender and race. So to counter that implicit bias, and I think that's a real appropriate use of the word here, the inclusion rider counters that by saying, for parts five lines or less, supporting roles specifically, you have to audition women, people of color, LGBT, people with disability, so that bias doesn't fire.

And so it's really about understanding, you'd never put an inclusion rider for the lead character because the bias there is explicit and it's economic, which is why we're doing the largest economic analysis to counter now a different bias. The leadership role behind the camera is about perceptions of who can be a leader. That requires a different solution than thinking about implicit bias in small roles on screen.

So each one of these, if you go to the literature and you understand how people process and make decisions and what solutions in the past have worked and haven't, you then can craft really specific, narrow ways in which to counter the ways that inequality gets perpetuated across decision making.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: That's fantastic.

STACY SMITH: So that's an example. Another issue might be somebody going into a room and they want to pitch, they have a new idea. And you walk in the room, let's say you happen to be a female director and you're pitching your vision for a story you're working on and you walk in the room and all the movie posters have men in them and you're pitching to a room full of men and they say, we've been dying to see a female director. We're so excited.

That woman's gender might actually, based on the research with stereotype threats, might actually have a negative impact on what she does in that meeting. And so even the environment that people are in when they pitch, particularly if they are the only one or they're in an environment where the queues are pull male or pull Caucasian, companies really need to think about their environment, the composition of teams, and what they say, because the last thing you want to do is set someone up to perhaps underperform because cognitively they're fulfilling the stereotype about their group.

And this is where we'd say to folks that are interested in this, read all the literature on stereotype threats and that will give you an idea to think about how to clear the air of stereotypes to ensure that everyone who walks through the door has the opportunity to thrive just like their white male counterparts.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: So I'm positive that our listeners are hanging on your every word and want more from Stacy Smith. Where can they find you on the Internet?

STACY SMITH: Great question. It's easy to locate us either through a search or Annenberg.usc.edu/aii, on Twitter and Insta we're @inclusionists, and on Facebook you can find us at AnnenbergInclusion.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And what is next for your team?

STACY SMITH: Well, I think we're in a really exciting moment. A few months ago I happened to be in conversation with the Dean of Religious Life on campus at USC. And he said that one of the most important questions that students used to ask him was, what should I do with my life? And increasingly the question that he is getting asked on campuses, why should I live?

And there's a very serious mental health crisis going on in the United States and globally and we decided through generous funding by the Lovell Foundation to really explore portrayals of mental health and mental illness in film and television. And so one of the next big projects we'll be rolling out very soon this fall is looking at how depictions of mental health are being portrayed, what groups are being stigmatized and the way in which the Hollywood community is really thinking about this serious issue.

And I think because all of our work is intersectional, this will be probably one of our most important studies and we're really eager to get the research out there and put it in the hands of practitioners, put it in the hands of content creators, and really try to elevate the conversation about storytelling, stigmatization, and messages of hope and healing. And so I think that will be out either in October or November of this year.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Fantastic. Thank you so much for doing that work. As someone who needed to restrict my own social media consumption for my mental health, I really appreciate that. And I think the latest stat that I've observed is that one in four millennial women are taking antidepressants right now. So I think that will be incredibly powerful work. I can't wait to see it.

STACY SMITH: Thank you.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Stacy, thank you so much for being with us today and for sharing your story.

STACY SMITH: Very fun and can't wait for the next time that we get to catch up, and maybe things will have even changed by then.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yes, I hope so. Thanks again.

SONIA DARA: In this Cutting Edge Segment, we're taking a look back at the International Day of the Girl, which took place on October 11th, and how brands celebrated the moment.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: We're specifically looking at coverage by Sarah Mahoney that was published in Marketing Daily on October 9 under the headline, "Barbie, Dove Get Ready for the Day of the Girl." Both brands created content with the goal of "encouraging education, career models and mentoring."

SONIA DARA: Mattel's Barbie introduced the Dream Gap Project, an initiative to raise awareness of the ways that girls are held back from reaching their potential. If you haven't yet seen the video affiliated with this campaign, please toggle over to YouTube and search for The Dream Gap Project Barbie.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: This video is amazing and here are a few of the stats that they cite. Number one, girls are three-times less likely to be given a science-related toy than boys are; and number two, parents are twice as likely to google "is my son gifted" than "is my daughter gifted."

SONIA DARA: God.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And the best line of the video is this: We need to see brilliant women being brilliant, and to see how they got to where they are to imagine ourselves doing what they do. Cue the waterworks, this is a little girl saying this.

SONIA DARA: I love that.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Girls, we are here for you. We are trying to do precisely this.

SONIA DARA: Barbie is also funding a research program in collaboration with Associate Professor Andrei Cimpian from New York University, who, according to Mattel, is conducting the most comprehensive research on the Dream Gap in girls between the ages of five and seven.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: There is a lot more information about this campaign, including a great checklist on how you can help close the Dream Gap at Barbie.com/DreamGap.

SONIA DARA: Mahoney also takes a look at how Unilever's Dove honored International Day of the Girl. Dove debuted Girl Collective, which is "a sisterhood on a mission to raise the self-esteem of girls everywhere" with a promise to reach an additional 20 million girls with positive messages.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: In addition to a campaign video, the brand created a closed Facebook Group called Dove Girl Collective with the description, we're all here to discuss issues we face every day, and work together to create new solutions and empower each other. Shonda Rhimes, who has been partnering with Dove on Real

Beauty Production videos, hosted the kickoff event on Facebook Live for this new group. So it was very exciting.

SONIA DARA: Mahoney wraps the article with a few more ways that brands and nonprofit organizations marked the occasion. You can read the full article at mediapost.com, just do a quick search for Barbie, Dove, Day of the Girl.

Well, listeners, that about wraps it up for this episode. Big thanks to Kristin Carr and Brianna Roberts for sharing more about the Returnity program that they've kicked off here at the company.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And thank you to Stacy Smith for coming to campus and for sharing your research with both our Women of Microsoft Employee Resource Group, and of course with our podcast audience here.

SONIA DARA: And thanks to you our listeners for tuning into another episode. Please remember to rate, review, and share our show on Apple podcasts, or wherever fine podcasts can be found.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: If you have any feedback or questions, you can email us at wibt@microsoft.com or tweet us @MicrosoftWomen.

SONIA DARA: Listeners, your mission for this episode, if you choose to accept it, it to participate in Giving Tuesday. Giving Tuesday is a global day of giving fueled by the power of social media and collaboration. This year, the event will take place on November 27th, kicking off the charitable season when many focus on their holiday and end-of-year giving

Consider honoring the event with a donation to a nonprofit creating greater access to technology for underrepresented populations. A few that we've covered on this show include: Techbridge Girls, IGNITE Worldwide, and Kal Academy. Once you make your donation, remember to share your participation on social media with the hashtag #GivingTuesday. You never know who you might inspire to contribute to these great organizations as well.

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