Barbie® in the Labor Force

PowerPoint/SMART/ActivInspire Lesson Plan

Lesson Author

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Standards and Benchmarks (see page 24)

Lesson Description

Since 1920, women have more than doubled their share of the labor force. More women are working, but has the type of work they do advanced similarly? What were the top occupations for women 20, 60, and 100 years ago, and how do those occupations compare with women's choices today? In this lesson, students use primary documents to review historical trends in women's share of the labor force and chosen occupations. Using Barbie careers as a time line, they speculate as to why Barbie represented certain careers for girls at different points in time since 1959. They choose which career Barbie might represent next year and explain that choice in a one-page essay.

Concepts

Labor force

Labor trends

Objectives

Students will

- define labor force,
- identify trends in labor force participation, and
- examine women's occupations historically.

Time Required

90 minutes

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Materials

- *Barbie in the Labor Force* (PowerPoint, SMART, ActivInspire) Slides 1 through 10
- Prepare the following based on the option you choose:
  - Small-Group Option
    - Handout 3, cut into Barbie cards, one set for each group of 4 to 5 students
    - Handout 4, one copy for each group of 4 to 5 students
  - All-Class Option
    - *Barbie in the Labor Force* (PowerPoint, SMART, ActivInspire) Slides 11-20 or 21-23, depending on the size you wish to use, cut into cards
    - Handouts 1, 2, and 5, one copy for each student
    - An extra sheet of paper and a ruler for each student
    - Glue or tape to place Barbie cards on the time line

Procedure

1. Explain that women's participation in the labor force has changed over time, both in the number of women workers and in the type of work women do. Show Slide 1 and tell students they are looking at a 1925 bulletin from the U.S. Bureau of the Census that provides the percentages of persons 10 years of age and over engaged in gainful occupations. Ask the following questions:
   - What percentage of women were working in 1880? (*14.7*)
   - What percentage of women were working in 1890? (*17.4*)
   - 1900? (*18.3*)
   - 1910? (*23.4*)
   - 1920? (*21.1*)
   - What was the trend in women's employment? (*Women's employment increased each decade until 1920.*)
   - What was the trend in men's employment? (*Men's employment increased each decade until 1920.*)
   - What might explain the drop in employment of both men and women in 1920? (*Possible answers: There was a recession in 1920 that extended into 1921. World War I had ended and the economy was transitioning from wartime to peacetime.*)

2. Distribute *Handout 1: 1925 Publication Excerpt* or provide one student a copy to read aloud. Ask students to explain the author's reasoning for the drop in employment from 1910 to 1920. Revisit the first paragraph of the second page if necessary. (*The author reasons that because the Census in 1910 included the months through April 15, while*

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the Census in 1920 was taken on the first day of 1920, some employment in agriculture that came later in the spring would not have been reported in the 1920 statistic.)

3. Explain that students are going to look at statistics and **labor trends** to study women's participation in the labor force and their career choices.

4. Show Slide 2. Instruct students to read the graph heading, and ask a student to describe what is shown on the graph. (*The graph shows the percentage (or share) of the labor force held by women and the percentage (or share) of the labor force held by men by decade.*) Define the **labor force** as the total number of workers, including both the employed and the unemployed. Explain that the unemployed are people without jobs who are actively seeking work. So, the labor force consists of people who are working and those who are not working but seeking work.
   - What happened to men's share of the labor force from 1920 through 1960? (*It declined from 80 percent to 68 percent.*)
   - What happened to women's share of the labor force from 1920 through 1960? (*It increased from 20 percent to 32 percent.*)
   - For 1970, men's share of the labor force was projected to decline to 66 percent and women's share of the labor force was projected to increase to 34 percent. Do you think these projections proved to be accurate? (*Answers will vary, but it is reasonable to expect the trends established over the previous decades to continue.*)

5. Choose a student to read aloud the paragraphs under the graph on Slide 2. Ask the following questions:
   - Do you think that women represented 1 in 3 workers in the labor force by 1970? (*Answers will vary.*)
   - What do you think women's share of the labor force is today? (*Answers will vary.*)
   - The decline in men's share of the labor force is explained by early retirement of older men and a trend toward higher educational attainment of younger men. How would the pursuit of higher education explain a reduction in men's labor force participation? (*If men spend more years in school, they have fewer years in the labor force.*)

6. Show Slide 3. Remind students that in 1960, women's share of the labor force was expected to grow to 34 percent by 1970. Ask a student to determine from the graph women's approximate share of the labor force in 1970. (*Approximately 38 percent*)

7. Show Slide 4 and explain that these are the data represented on Slide 3. Direct students to the title of this dataset: "Women's Share of the Labor Force in the United States." Point out that these are annual data, with an observation date of January 1 from 1970 through 2000. These data are given in percentages and are not seasonally adjusted. Seasonally adjusted data would be adjusted mathematically to remove the dips and

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bumps in employment that occur due to seasonal hiring, such as extra retail workers hired for the holidays.

8. Distribute *Handout 2: Labor Force Participation*, a blank piece of paper, and a ruler to each student. Instruct students to use the paper to draw the graph on the handout, adding the men's and women's labor force shares for 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 provided on Slide 4. Instruct them to include projected shares for 2010.

9. When students have completed their graphs, review the data:

Year	Women	Men
1970	38.1	61.9
1980	42.5	57.5
1990	45.2	54.8
2000	46.5	53.5

10. Ask students to share their projections for 2010 and record these on the board. Show Slide 5, which reveals women's share of the labor force through 2011. Determine which student's projections were closest. Discuss the differences in the student's expectations as follows:
    - What was the change in women's share of the labor force between 1970 and 1980? (*4.4 percent*)
    - What was the change in women's share of the labor force between 1980 and 1990? (*2.7 percent*)
    - What was the change in women's share of the labor force between 1990 and 2000? (*1.3 percent*)
    - How would you describe women's share of the labor force between 1970 and 2000? (*Women's share is increasing but at a decreasing rate.*)
    - Based on the data, what is a reasonable projection of women's share of the labor force between 2000 and 2010? (*Answers will vary, but students might say it is reasonable to project that women's share of the labor force would have increased at a decreasing rate, or that it would gain less than 1.3 percent.*)
    - What was the difference in women's share of the labor force between 2000 and 2010? (*0.2 percent*)
    - What was the difference in women's share of the labor force between 2010 and 2011? (*0.1 percent*)

If you are presenting this lesson over a two-day period, stop here.

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11. Explain that just as women's share of the labor force has changed, so has the type of work women do.

12. Show Slide 6. Ask students to take a moment to study the slide and then call on a student to explain what the slide reveals. (*The chart reveals the 10 largest occupations of women from 1900 through 1950.*) Ask the following questions:
    - What were the largest occupations held by women in 1900? (*General household workers; teachers; saleswomen; housekeepers; laundresses; farmworkers [paid and unpaid]; dressmakers; and operatives in textile mills*)
    - How did the list change in 1910? (*Wage-earning farmers fell from the list and the stenographers, typists, secretaries category was added.*)
    - What changed between 1910 and 1920? (*General clerical workers and bookkeepers were added; farmers and operatives in textile mills were removed from the top 10 list.*)
    - What was added in 1930 and what did the addition replace? (*Operatives in apparel factories replaced dressmakers.*)
    - What was added in 1940 and what was replaced? (*Nurses and waitresses replaced laundresses and unpaid farmworkers.*)
    - What was added in 1950? (*Telephone operators*)
    - What was removed in 1950? (*Housekeepers*)
13. Show Slide 7 and ask the following questions:
    - What occupations remain in the top 10 for women in 2010? (*Secretaries and administrative assistants [formerly labeled "stenographers, typists, secretaries"], registered nurses [formerly labeled "nurses (professional)"], elementary and middle school teachers [formerly labeled "teachers"], retail salespersons [formerly labeled "saleswomen"], and waiters and waitresses [formerly labeled "waitresses"]*)
    - Office clerks (formerly labeled "general clerical workers") and bookkeeping are still in the top 20 occupations. Why are telephone operators no longer on the list? (*That occupation is obsolete.*)

14. Proceed with one of the following options:

    Small-Group Option: Place students in groups of 4 or 5 and distribute a deck of Barbie cards from *Handout 3: Barbie Cards*, *Handout 4: Barbie Careers Time Line*. Instruct students to display all of the Barbie cards. Tell them their task is going to be to place the cards on the time line in the correct order the Barbies were introduced.

    All-Class Option: Draw a time line on the board, indicating every 5 years from 1955 through 2010. Show students the Barbie cards from the *Barbie in the Labor Force* slides (as described in the Materials section). Tell them you will work together as a class to determine the correct order the Barbies were introduced.

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15. Ask the following question:
    - What clues might you use to determine the date each Barbie was introduced? (*Answers will vary but may include popularity of careers over time, women's entrance into certain careers over time, or different hair and clothing styles.*)

16. Instruct the groups to use the clues to determine when in history each Barbie was developed and place each Barbie card on the date on the time line when they think the Barbie was introduced and draw a line from the card to the guessed date. Alternatively, complete the time line as a class, holding up each card and asking students where it should be placed. Note that in a few cases, two or more Barbie careers were introduced in the same year, and that the cards provide a sampling and not all of the Barbie careers introduced. Allow time for students to complete the activity.

17. After the activity, ask the following questions and as necessary have students rearrange the Barbie cards at the appropriate dates on the time line(s). Some questions may require an Internet search for answers.
    - Which Barbie career was introduced first? (*Fashion model*)
    - In what year was fashion model Barbie introduced? (*1959*)
    - Which Barbie career came next and in what year? (*The fashion editor was introduced in 1960.*)
    - Four Barbie careers were introduced in 1961. Which two were they? (*Nurse, singer, stewardess, and ballerina*)
    - What clues did you use to place the stewardess at this early point on the time line? (*Answers will vary but may include that the term "stewardess" was replaced by the term "flight attendant" later in history or that the clothing reflects 1960 styles.*)
    - Would an airline pilot Barbie likely have been released in the 1960s? Why or why not? (*No. There were no female commercial airline pilots in the 1960s.*) Explain that Emily Warner, flying for Frontier Airlines, and Bonnie Tiburzi, flying for American Airlines, were the first female commercial airline pilots, both hired in 1973.[1]
    - Which other Barbie careers belong in the 1960s and where should they be placed on the time line? (*Career girl Barbie [1963], student teacher Barbie [1965], and astronaut Barbie [gray suit; 1965]*)
    - Do you find any of the Barbie careers surprising for the 1960s? (*Students may say that astronaut Barbie seems out of place.*) Explain that Sally Ride became the first American woman in space on June 18, 1983.[2] However, Valentina Tereshkova, a Russian cosmonaut, rode into space in 1963.

18. Read the following excerpt from a review by Yana V. Rodgers of the book *Almost Astronauts: 13 Women Who Dared to Dream*.[3]

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In the early 1960s, a group of women dubbed the "Mercury 13" successfully completed a grueling set of psychological and physical tests in a private program designed to explore if women were as qualified as men to become astronauts. Led by Jerrie Cobb, the first woman to pass all the tests, their performance in these tests equaled or surpassed that of the male astronauts hired by NASA and clearly demonstrated that women were physically capable of working in this capacity. The bigger challenge proved to be the struggle to change prevailing attitudes and convince the United States government that women had the right to become astronauts.

Despite an extremely well-organized and persistent lobbying campaign, their proven qualifications, and high-level connections (the group of 13 included the wife of a senator), Ms. Cobb and her colleagues failed to gain admission into NASA's official astronaut training program. Their political efforts could not overcome intense opposition stemming from the condescending coverage in the media, stonewalling from Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson (he famously scribbled "Let's stop this now!" on a memo about women in NASA), and damaging testimony from a renowned but resentful female pilot at a key Congressional hearing. It took almost two more decades before women gained admission into NASA's training program.

19. Ask the following questions:

- Why would Mattel have produced an astronaut Barbie if there would be no American female astronauts for another 18 years? (*Answers will vary but may include that astronauts were prominent in the news; there had been a female cosmonaut; two manned space flights had taken place in 1961 and 1962 as part of Project Mercury, and Project Gemini was underway in 1965.*)
- Which Barbie careers were introduced in the 1970s? (*Surgeon [1973] and Olympic downhill skier [1975]*)
- Why would Mattel create a surgeon Barbie doll? (*Answers will vary but may include to empower young women, to help young women see themselves as surgeons as adults, or that the women's movement was gaining momentum.*)
- Why would Mattel create a downhill skier Barbie? (*The Winter Olympics were coming up in 1976.*[4])
- Which Barbie careers were introduced in the 1980s? (*Veterinarian [1985] and astronaut [pink suit; 1986]*)
- Why would Mattel repeat an astronaut at this time? (*Sally Ride had participated in missions in 1983 and 1984. Judith Resnik had participated in a 1984 mission and died in the 1986 Challenger disaster.*)
- Which Barbie careers were introduced between 1990 and 1995? (*Naval petty officer [1991], presidential candidate [1992], Marine Corps sergeant [1992], business executive [pink suit; 1992], army medic [1993], firefighter [1995]*)

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- What do the majority of these early-1990s careers have in common? (*Answers will vary, but students might note that they are all traditionally male occupations and that most are protective occupations.*)
- What was happening during the early 1990s that may have influenced Barbie's maker to develop those particular Barbie careers? (*Middle East military action: In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait; in 1991, the U.S. military entered Kuwait.*[5])
- Had there been a U.S. female presidential candidate up until 1992? (*Yes. Victoria Woodhull was the first U.S. presidential candidate, representing the Equal Rights Party in 1872 and the Humanitarian Party in 1892. Of the two dominant parties, Laura Clay was a Democratic Party nominee in 1920; Margaret Chase Smith was a Republican primary candidate in 1964; Shirley Chisholm and Bella Abzug were Democratic primary candidates in 1972; Ellen McCormack was a Democratic nominee in 1976; and Patricia Schroeder was a Democratic primary candidate in 1988.*[6])
- Which Barbie careers were introduced between 1996 and 2000? (*Olympic gymnast [1996], dentist [1997], WNBA player [1998], business executive [gray suit; 1999], soccer player [1999], airline pilot [1999], and Olympic swimmer [2000]*)
- How would you characterize the Barbie careers of the second half of the 1990s compared with the first half of the 1990s? (*All of the Barbie careers represent jobs traditionally classified as "men only" jobs. The jobs in the first half of the decade involved protecting country or community. The Barbies in the second half of the decade represent women in professional sports and professional jobs.*)
- Which Barbies were introduced after 2000? (*Art teacher [2002], producer [2003], presidential candidate [red suit; 2004], and race car driver [2010]*)

20. OPTIONAL: Display Slide 8, which provides the years Barbies were released, including those in the cards and others.

21. Explain that students have speculated as to why some Barbie careers were chosen. Often, Barbie careers followed historical events and trends or focused on occupations that the maker of Barbie might want to encourage women to pursue. Distribute *Handout 5:* Onion *Article* and instruct students to read the article regarding the choice of CEO Barbie.

22. Show Slide 9 and ask the following questions:
    - According to the *Onion* article, how many of the top 500 American companies had a female CEO in 2005? (*9*)
    - What percentage of Fortune 500 CEOs were female in 2005? (*1.8*)
    - What is the trend in the appointment of female CEOs in Fortune 500 companies since 1995? (*It is increasing.*)
    - Is the article merely humorous or is there an element of truth? (*Answers will vary, but students will likely recognize that, although the trend for Fortune 500 com-*

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panies to hire female CEOs is increasing, 3.8 percent indicates that aspiring to become a female CEO of a Fortune 500 company is, at this point, unlikely for most women. Be sure students recognize that the Onion *is a satirical publication.*)

23. Explain that there really isn't a CEO Barbie but female computer engineers banded together in 2010 to see that computer engineering would become a Barbie career. They did so for various reasons but, in particular, they wanted to draw attention to their field. In 2008, women received only 18 percent of the computer science degrees, down from 37 percent in 1985. Ask students to speculate as to the reason for the drop. (*Answers will vary, but students might suggest that there are other occupations that are more attractive to women or that women do not like or feel capable of understanding computer science.*)

24. Show the video *Bridging the Gender Gap: Why More Women Aren't Computer Scientists, Engineers* (length 7:57) by clicking the link on Slide 10 or going to http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/science/jan-june12/womenscience_04-26.html. Alternatively, play the audio version or instruct students to read the transcript. After viewing, ask the following questions.

    - What are three reasons why so few young women choose to study computer science, physics, and engineering? (*They think those fields are not interesting; they feel they would not be good at the skills required in those fields; and they have an unattractive image of people who work in those fields.*)
    - Do you think of computer engineering as a "boy thing"? (*Answers will vary. Ask students to explain why they do or do not see it as a boy thing.*)
    - Why should women consider computer science, physics, and engineering? (*These fields pay well and offer opportunities to do creative work.*)
    - How would women's involvement in these fields benefit the economy? (*Answers will vary, but students should recall that a greater diversity in products would result from a female perspective and they should recognize that an increase in women's income benefits their families.*)
    - What was one thing that happened in the 1970s that may have resulted in an increase in women becoming doctors and lawyers? (*Television programs depicted women in those roles, and women began entering into those fields.*)
    - What does Dr. Klawe suggest as ways to increase women's interest in these fields? (*Woman should be introduced to these fields just as they are entering college. Woman in college should have to take an intro course in computer science—one that is fun.*)
    - What suggestions do you have for encouraging women to enter computer science, physics, and engineering? (*Answers will vary.*)

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Use optional procedure steps 25 through 28, or skip to the Closure.

25. Explain that it is suggested that the first computer programmer was a woman. Ada Lovelace wrote "code" for the Analytical Engine in the early 1840s. Click the "Finding Ada" link on Slide 10 and ask a student to read Lovelace's biography.

26. Continue to the next link, "Sketch of the Analytical Engine," and explain that the *Sketch of The Analytical Engine Invented by Charles Babbage* was written by L.F. Menabrea of Turin, Officer of the Military Engineers, in 1843.

27. Click on the next link, "Sketch of the Analytical Engine (Translated Version)" and explain that this version is easier to read. This writing was translated by Ada Lovelace, who also added notes, which are at the end of the document. Scroll down to allow students to see the type of technical input contributed by Lovelace. Remind students that Lovelace was the mother of three children and died at the age of 36. She had done considerable work in very few years.

28. Click on the final link, "Letter from DeMorgan to Lady Byron" (Ada's mother). Read the entire letter, with emphasis on the passages pulled from the text. Ask the students to compare attitudes toward women in technical careers then and now, given what they've learned in this lesson.

Closure

29. Ask the following questions:
    - What is the labor force? (*The labor force is the total number of workers, including both the employed and the unemployed.*)
    - Approximately what percentage of the labor force is now occupied by females? (*approximately 46.5*)
    - What is the trend in women's share of the labor force? (*It had been increasing until 2011 but recently declined.*)
    - What is the trend in women's career choices? (*Answers will vary, but students should point out that most of the top-10 female occupations in 1950 remained in the top-20 female occupations in 2010.*)
    - How might girls and women be encouraged to enter more diverse fields, such as computer science and physics? (*Answers will vary but students might suggest that more women in these roles be portrayed in the popular media, that women be required to take intro courses in these fields, or that efforts be made to change the perception women have of those who enter these fields by hearing from more women engineers.*)

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Assessment

30. Assign student partners to choose a Barbie career for next year. They must present their selection in a one-page essay, using a minimum of three sources to investigate the career choice and justify why the timing of that career choice is appropriate.

Endnotes

1 http://www.aa.com/i18n/amrcorp/corporateInformation/facts/femalepilots.jsp; http://cf.alpa.org/internet/alp/2000/jun00p29.htm.

2 http://womenshistory.about.com/od/aviationspace/a/timeline_space.htm.

3 http://www.amazon.com/review/R273LWNJPO2ZON.

4 http://www.historyonthenet.com/Olympics/olympics_timeline.htm.

5 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_United_States_military_operations#1990.E2.80.931999.

6 http://womenshistory.about.com/od/publicofficials/tp/ran_for_president.01.htm.

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Handout 1: 1925 Publication Excerpt (page 1 of 2)

FACTS ABOUT WORKING WOMEN

INTRODUCTION

That more than eight and one-half million women in the United States are working outside their homes for wages and salaries is a fact which invariably challenges attention and evokes innumerable questions. What do they do—these women?[1] What proportion are they of all the women in the country, and has that proportion, as well as the actual number of working women, increased since 1910?

Who are these millions of women who earn their own living and in so many instances contribute to the support of their families as well? How many are native or foreign born, how many are white, and how many are of other races? How old are they? How many of them are under 25 years of age, and how do the ages of working women compare with the ages of working men?

How many of these wage-earning women are married, and what proportion do they form of all the married women in the country? Has that proportion increased or decreased in the last decade? In what occupations are the greatest numbers of married women to be found, and how old are the most of these women who continue in or return to their jobs after marriage?

These and many other questions have been answered in the statistics of the Fourteenth Census of the United States, published by the Bureau of the Census in a detailed and comprehensive report on occupations.[2] These facts disclosed by the census of 1920, in so far as they relate to women at work, are presented here in graphic form for ready reference. The charts and tables which follow cover outstanding facts concerning the working women of the United States as a whole; it is impractical to present in similar manner the data for the 48 States. Comparison between 1910 and 1920 is shown in all cases where comparable figures were available and where the facts could be well presented graphically.

[1] In this connection see U. S. Women's Bureau. Occupational progress of women: An interpretation of census statistics of women in gainful occupations. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1922. 37 p. (*Its* Bulletin 27.)

[2] U. S. Bureau of the Census. Fourteenth census. Population: 1920. v. 4, Occupations. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1923. 1309 p.

1

SOURCE: Facts about Working Woman, U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1925, pp. 1-2; http://fraser.stlouisfed.org/docs/publications/women/b0046_dolwb_1925.pdf.

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Handout 1: 1925 Publication Excerpt (page 2 of 2)

In comparing the figures for 1910 and 1920 it is necessary to bear in mind that the census date changed from April 15 in 1910 to January 1 in 1920. This change in date, the Bureau of the Census points out,[3] probably accounts for the decrease shown in the number of women engaged in agricultural pursuits, since in most localities agricultural work is at or near its lowest ebb in January. However, this decrease "may have been apparent only and due to an over-enumeration in 1910. In a considerable measure, however, each decrease probably was actual. To the extent the decreases were actual, they are believed to have resulted mainly from the change in the census date and changes in the enumerators' instructions."

Another fact to be noted relates to the statistics showing marital condition. Since marital condition in relation to occupation was considered of greater importance in the case of women than of men, the marital condition of working women but not of working men is brought out in the report of the Bureau of the Census.[4] Likewise, because of the special significance attached to the employment of married women, special tabulations were made for this class of women—that is, wives—as a separate group, while the returns for all other marital classes—that is, women who were single, widowed, divorced, or of unknown status—were tabulated together. Hence no separate statistics for single women are available. Furthermore, it was assumed at the censuses of 1910 and 1920 that all married women at work were at least 15 years of age. The tabulations regarding marital condition, therefore, were made on that basis, whereas other facts presented relate to women and girls 10 years of age and over.

Only two charts do not present data taken from the census tables; charts 22 and 23 are based on studies made by the Women's Bureau. Although surveys of hours of work of women in industry have been made in 13 States, wage studies have been conducted by the bureau in but 10 States.[5] In surveying a State no attempt is made to include all the women at work in that State, but sufficiently representative numbers of women and establishments are covered to present a cross-section picture and provide a fair index to the conditions under which the wage-earning women of the whole State work.

This bulletin is presented in the belief that it will prove a useful handbook in the study of the working woman of the United States and her status in the industrial world.

[3] Op. cit., p. 23.
[4] Op. cit., p. 691.
[5] Data for State studies in process of preparation have not been included.

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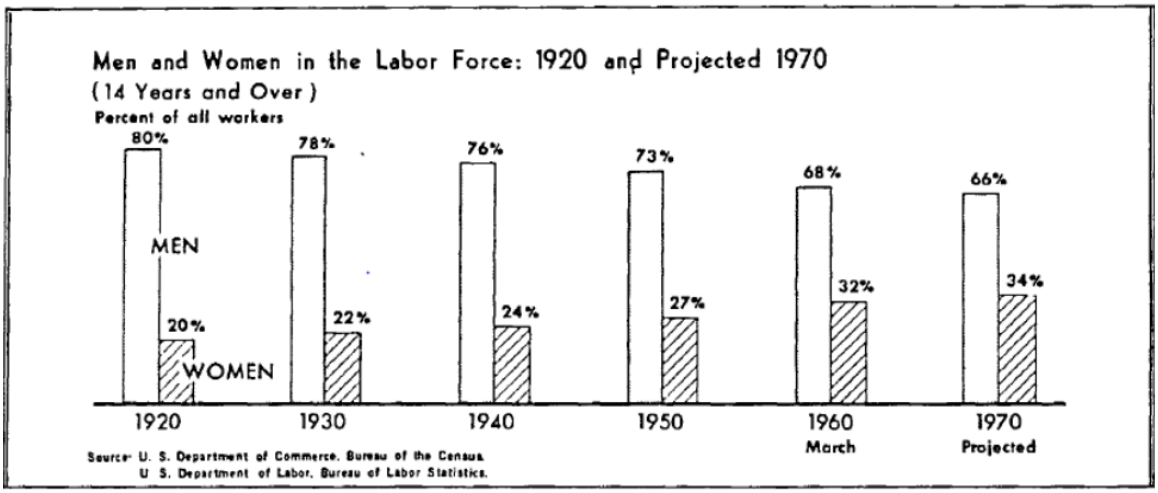
Handout 2: Labor Force Participation



The proportion of women workers in the labor force has increased markedly since 1920.

In 1920, the approximately 8 1/4 million women workers represented 1 out of every 5 workers; in 1940, the 13 million women workers represented about 1 in 4 workers; today they represent almost 1 in 3. It is expected that they will represent 1 in 3 by 1970.

Early retirement from the labor force of older men and the trend toward higher educational attainment of the younger men are factors which have contributed to the changing proportions of men and women in the labor force.

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Handout 3: Barbie Cards (page 1 of 5)

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Handout 3: Barbie Cards (page 2 of 5)

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Handout 3: Barbie Cards (page 3 of 5)

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Handout 3: Barbie Cards (page 4 of 5)

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Handout 3: Barbie Cards (page 5 of 5)

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Handout 4: Barbie Careers Time Line (page 1 of 3)

2012
2011
2010
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2006
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1995

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Handout 4: Barbie Careers Time Line (page 2 of 3)

1994
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1992
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Handout 4: Barbie Careers Time Line (page 3 of 3)

1976
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Handout 5: *Onion* Article* (page 1 of 2)

CEO Barbie Criticized For Promoting Unrealistic Career Images

Issue 41 • 36 • Sep 7, 2005

EL SEGUNDO, CA—Toy company Mattel is under fire from a group of activists who say their popular doll's latest incarnation, CEO Barbie, encourages young girls to set impractical career goals.

"This doll furthers the myth that if a woman works hard and sticks to her guns, she can rise to the top," said Frederick Lang of the Changes Institute, a children's advocacy organization. "Our young girls need to learn to accept their career futures, not be set up with ridiculously unattainable images."

Mattel's controversial CEO Barbie.

The issue was first brought to national attention by mother, activist, and office manager Connie Bergen, 36, who became concerned when her 5-year-old daughter received the doll as a birthday gift and began "playing CEO."

"Women don't run companies," Bergen said. "Typically, those with talent, charisma, and luck work behind the scenes to bring a man's vision to light."

She added: "Real women in today's work force don't have Barbie's Dream Corner Office. More often than not, they have cubicles—or Dream Kitchens. I mean, what's next? 'Accepted By Her Male Peers' Polly Pocket?"

Despite the growing furor over the doll, Mattel's top brass has indicated no plans to cease its production, insisting that the newest member of the Barbie family represents a positive role model for girls.

"Young girls can be anything they want. There is nothing standing in their way," read a statement signed by Mattel CEO Robert Eckert, president Matt Bousquette, executive vice president Tom Debrowski, and CFO Kevin Farr.

Said Bergen: "I graduated cum laude from Radcliffe and have worked hard all my life, and my career doesn't look anything like Barbie's. Currently, there are only nine female CEOs in America's top 500 companies. To tell our daughters anything else is a lie."

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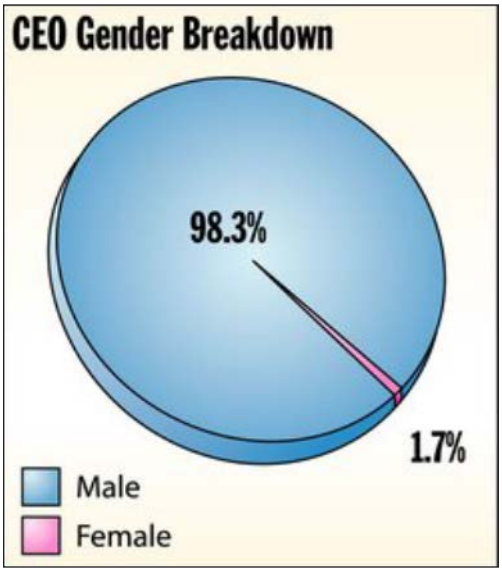
Handout 5: *Onion* Article (page 2 of 2)

Figures released by the Changes Institute indicate that, although women make up 46 percent of the work force, a mere 15 percent are senior managers. Lang maintains that these facts don't square with the image of the career woman put forth by the doll.



Said Lang: "Any girl who thinks that she can run a large corporation when she grows up is in for a bitter disappointment, and it is simply shameful that Mattel would seek to cash in on impressionable young girls this way."

CEO Barbie comes with a number of accessories and environments, including the Super Barbie Conference Fun Table, Barbie's Company Dream Car and Underpaid Assistant Ken. But by far the most popular version of the doll has been the Talking CEO Barbie.

"This doll says things like, 'Did you get me those projections?' and, 'We need to cut our operating costs by 10 percent,'" Lang said. "It is dishonest to dangle this carrot of success in front of our daughters' noses, when we know that the odds that a girl will grow up to order someone around are virtually zero."

Lang said he does not expect Mattel to recall CEO Barbie, but he wants to send a powerful message to the people in charge.

"When your daughter comes home crying because she was passed over for a promotion for the fourth time, what are you going to tell her?" Lang asked. "It would be easier if she'd been raised with dolls like Glass Ceiling American Girl, Service Sector Bratz, or Maria The White House Maid."

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Standards and Benchmarks

Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts

Reading: Informational Text

- Key Ideas and Details

  CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

  CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.3: Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

  CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

- Craft and Structure

  CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.6: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.

Common Core State Standards: Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, Grades 6-12

History/Social Studies

- Key Ideas and Details

  CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

  CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3: Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

  CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

  CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9: Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

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