**Why Aren’t More Girls Choosing to Pursue Careers in Math and Science?**

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*[Natalie Angier wrote](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/03/science/mystery-of-the-missing-women-in-science.html) in September about the paradox of why girls who were equally competent and confident as boys in science and mathematics still chose not to enter the STEM fields — science, technology, engineering and math. The statistics are baffling. For example, women earned 37 percent of computer science degrees in 1985, yet* [*only 18 percent in 2010*](http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/20/a-viral-video-encourages-girls-to-become-engineers/)*. And* [*only one-fifth of physics Ph.D.’s*](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/06/magazine/why-are-there-still-so-few-women-in-science.html) *in this country are awarded to women.*

*Why aren’t more girls choosing to pursue careers in math and science?*

In [“A Viral Video Encourages Girls to Become Engineers,”](http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/20/a-viral-video-encourages-girls-to-become-engineers/) Claire Cain Miller writes about a viral video produced by a new toy company that is trying to change those statistics.

Who said girls want to dress in pink and play with dolls, especially when they could be building Rube Goldberg machines instead?

That is the message of a video that has gone viral since it was posted on YouTube this week — an ad for GoldieBlox, a start-up toy company that sells games and books to encourage girls to become engineers.

In the video, three girls are bored watching princesses in pink on TV. So they grab a tool kit, goggles and a hard hat and set to work building a Rube Goldberg machine that sends pink teacups and baby dolls flying through the house, using umbrellas, ladders and, of course, GoldieBlox toys.

It all happens to the tune of “Girls” by the Beastie Boys, a decidedly anti-feminist ballad that the ad’s creators rewrote.

The Beastie Boys sang, “Girls to do the dishes/Girls to clean up my room/Girls to do the laundry/Girls and in the bathroom/Girls, that’s all I really want is girls.”

One of the actresses in the ad sings: “Girls build a spaceship/Girls code the new app/Girls that grow up knowing/That they can engineer that/Girls, that’s all we really need is girls/To bring us up to speed it’s girls/Our opportunity is girls/Don’t underestimate girls….”

Women are vastly underrepresented as engineers at tech companies, largely because of a supply problem. In 2010, women earned just 18 percent of computer science degrees, down from 37 percent in 1985, according to the National Center for Women and Information Technology. The problem, many analysts say, starts in childhood, when teachers and parents do not encourage girls to pursue engineering.

**Students:** Read the entire article, then tell us …

* Why aren’t more girls choosing to pursue careers in math and science?
* Watch the video above. What do you think the message is? Do you think the video is effective? What is your reaction?
* Do you think the problem is that parents, teachers and society in general do not encourage girls to enter these fields?
* Or, do you think it is seen as “not cool” for girls to excel in these subjects? Are some girls afraid they will be labeled as nerds?
* Several efforts are being made to get more girls into sciences and math — such as the toy company behind the above video and [programs to teach girls computer coding](http://dealbook.nytimes.com/2013/04/02/opening-a-gateway-for-girls-to-enter-the-computer-field/). Do you think these efforts will be successful? What ideas do you have to encourage more girls to pursue STEM careers?