Lego releases female in STEM career ... and she’s no “Lady Scientist”

Jason Lomberg, Technical Editor

It seems the Danish toy brick conglomerate has finally accepted the fact that womenfolk inhabit the STEM fields. Earlier this month, Lego released the company’s first female scientist, Professor C. Bodin [1] – and she’s not clad in "girly" clothing or given the patronizing title of "Lady Scientist." In fact, if it weren’t for her purple undershirt, feminine hairstyle, and red lipstick, Professor Bodin would be indistinguishable from a “normal” scientist.

Professor Bodin is part of Lego’s Minifigure Series 11 and her austere title of "Scientist" alludes to the fact that her gender is subordinate to her STEM career. This is a huge step for a toy universe whose females typically embrace every known gender stereotype. Behold the "Lady Robot," one of Lego’s prior attempts at sexual equality:

It looks like a cross between Miss America and Rosie from The Jetsons.

This was little better than Lego's female astronauts and other lady-fied professions.

By contrast, Lady Bodin isn't defined by her reproductive organs (or fashion sense). Not that there's anything wrong with women dressing different than men. But when your ambassador for the female gender wears frilly pink and sports long eyelashes, blush, and lipstick, it's silly and demeaning. And this is from someone (yours truly)

who has never identified as a feminist.

"I think this figure is a positive step because it portrays a woman in a STEM career without resorting to gender stereotyping by making her pink or calling her a 'lady scientist," said Elizabeth Sweet, a doctoral candidate in sociology at the University of California, Davis.

Scientific American noted that the all-time minifigure gender ratio is 4:1 in favor of males (because of course someone would tabulate that), so this is a huge development.

Just so we're clear: Lego – or any corporation for that matter – shouldn't be under any obligation to support progressive politics or advocate for social change. Their number one prerogative should be to turn a profit. I have no problem with gender-based marketing; as far as I'm concerned, that's just good business. Furthermore, I see nothing wrong with Lego's controversial "Friends" series [2], which portrayed young girls in a non-sexualized (but largely feminine) manner.

But we can find a healthy medium between asexual, androgynous females and the stereotypical '50s housewife. And our children's toys can reflect that.

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Links:
[1] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/07/lego-scientist-woman_n_3882380.html
[2] http://76.my/Malaysia/lego-3930-friends-series-stephanie-s-outdoor-bakery-legoland-1201-15-Legoland@16.jpg