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Domesticating Barbie: An Archaeology of Barbie Material Culture and Domestic Ideology

Marlys Pearson[1] and Paul R. Mullins[2]

A systematic examination of Barbie fashions, accessories, and playsets produced since 1959 reveals several distinct phases in the domestic symbolism associated with Barbie. Today, Barbie grocery shops, cleans house, cares for her young siblings, and assumes careers which fill nurturing and protective roles like those championed in traditional domestic ideology. Yet in the late 1950s, Barbie was conceived and marketed as a single career girl who did not do "rough housework." This paper examines the range of clothing and accessories marketed alongside Barbie as a mechanism to trace the changes in Barbie's domestic image over nearly 40 years.

KEY WORDS: Barbie; domesticity; toys; gender.

"GIRLS CAN DO ANYTHING": BARBIE SYMBOLISM

Barbie discourses ranging from academic analyses to popular media commentaries envision a remarkably wide range of symbolism in the world's top-selling toy. The most common tendency of Barbie analysts is to hyperbolize the doll's social symbolism, variously imagining a ditzy hedonistic consumer, a hypersexualized bimbo, a subjugated homebody, or an utterly independent woman who demonstrates that "girls can do anything." Such caricatures make a variety of authoritative claims to capture the essential nature of the doll's symbolism, but none can condense the diverse spectrum of contradictory Barbie meanings. Since 1959 the doll's producers at Mattel always have attempted to circumscribe Barbie's symbolic possibilities through a series of often-contradictory maneuvers, such as simultaneously deemphasizing and tacitly exploiting her sexuality, resisting as

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well as coopting feminist broadsides, and celebrating Barbie's social significance while they attack a variety of musicians, artists, and writers who subversively exploit the doll's symbolic ambiguities (cf. Avasthi, 1997; Rand, 1995). Despite Mattel's fevered efforts, Barbie meanings encompass a vast range of gendered, material, and social possibilities which often depart significantly from the party line.

Perhaps the most problematic barrier to such interpretation of Barbie is the relative absence of systematic material analysis of the flood of dolls, clothing, and accessories which compose the Barbie universe. Popular and academic commentators alike routinely lapse into apocryphal observations of a few isolated accessories or a single physical attribute of the doll (e.g., hair, breasts), using this indiscriminate inspection as the tenuous foundation from which they can assail, celebrate, or ridicule Barbie symbolism along any number of agendas. Despite some quite cogent and perceptive insight into Barbie's complex social symbolism, there remains little structured analysis which systematically relates the doll's social symbolism to the material variation among the thousands of Barbie products manufactured since 1959.

We do not intend to ignore that Barbie's ultimate social meaning is a complex consequence of myriad competing visions which cannot be fully appreciated simply by examining Barbie material culture. A rigorous ethnography of the doll's consumers and the contexts in which Barbies have been consumed would be necessary to a critical anthropological interpretation of Barbie. An essential element of such an ethnography, though, should be a material analysis of Barbie clothes and accessories. In this sense, our "archaeology" of Barbie embrances the standard archaeological understanding of structured material description, identification of materials patterns, and anthropological analysis of the relationship between those patterns and their cultural and historical context. At the same time, we approach archaeological insight as a distinctive perspective which focuses on the rich variation and contradiction in material meanings. This is akin to Michel Foucault's (1972, pp. 138–140) notion of an archaeology which approaches meaning as metaphorical "layers" whose contradictory symbolism forms what he calls "spaces of dissension" (Foucault, 1972, p. 152; cf. Tilley, 1990, pp. 305–307). Such "spaces of dissension" are illuminated by objects like Barbie material culture whose symbolism is always contested.

Our advocacy of archaeological insight in this study has two basic implications. First, the flood of Barbie analysis in academic and popular literature makes little or no effort to understand Barbie material culture as a contiguous assemblage produced, consumed, and given meaning within a clearly defined sociohistorical context. Archaeologists would never consider analyzing a single object in isolation from related objects in the same assemblage or without reference to the interests of its producers or consumption context; Barbie commentators, though, routinely select a single accessory to buttress various interpretive claims. We are not suggesting that archaeological method is "objective" and inevitably will converge on Barbie's

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"authentic" essence. We do believe, however, that a systematic identification of all the elements of the Barbie universe provides a far more substantial foundation for interpretation than idiosyncratic insight or educated guesswork. Barbie provides a mirror of ourselves and society in the same way any commodity does: it is an alluring albeit idealized reflection which obliquely addresses social contradictions but evades or appears to resolve their most profound incongruities. To appreciate the complexity of this mirror, it is essential to acknowledge the specific range of options in Barbie material culture and probe how those options relate to broader social context.

A second implication of turning archaeological eyes on Barbie is archaeology's potential to advance our understanding of the present. A class of modern goods like Barbie material culture should demonstrate archaeology's capacity to interpret everyday life's most basic yet unexamined social and symbolic structures. As William Rathje's Garbage Project demonstrates, an archaeology which probes the difference between our perceptions of the material world and the actual patterns in that world can contemplate and perhaps transform the contradictions in our everyday lives (Rathje and Murphy, 1992; cf. Shanks and Tilley, 1987, pp. 172–173). Mattel argues that the standardized range of Barbies sold in over 70 countries and to consumers of every background in the United States simply provides "play options" with no relationship to consumer subjectivity (Westenhouser, 1994, p. 119). Yet Barbie is not simply a sort of postmodern blank slate which can symbolize anything to any consumer: instead, Barbie material culture opens up a circumscribed range of possible meanings on a series of relatively well-defined but contested subjects. The doll's social meanings are a dynamic product of, on one hand, the symbolic possibilities which its producers "encode" in Barbie (via, for instance, body form, clothing, and advertising) and, on the other hand, consumers' embrace, modification, subversion, and rejection of dominant ideologies and Mattel's intended Barbie meanings. Archaeological analysis offers a mechanism to link the doll's material style, seemingly disconnected ideologies, and consumers's negotiation of and resistance to those ideologies.

We approached Barbie material culture in the same way we would archaeologically examine any class of material objects. Perhaps the greatest challenge is simply defining what actually belongs in the Barbie universe: Mattel never has produced a catalog of the thousands of clothing and accessory sets it has manufactured, and many single outfits were modified from year to year or issued in multiple versions. The most authoritative inventory of Barbie material culture identifies 1179 outfits marketed in the United States between 1959 and 1976 (DeWein and Ashabraner, 1977, pp. 264–274). This includes 656 outfits for Barbie, 173 for boyfriend Ken, 173 for cousin Francie, 158 for sister Skipper, 13 for sister Tutti, and 6 for Skipper's friend Ricky, excluding a handful of gift sets and dressed dolls. We also examined Mattel advertising and dealer literature, studied collectors' magazines like *Barbie Bazaar* and *Miller's Barbie Collector*, and surveyed catalogs for auction houses which specialize in Barbies. In addition to these reference

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texts, we examined clothing and accessories at Barbie shows and talked to a range of collectors over several years. This vast collector's discourse provides encyclopedic identifications of Barbie material culture, but it is almost entirely devoid of any consideration of Barbie as a cultural artifact. We have not ignored the distinct biases of these texts and their construction of symbolic and exchange values for Barbie material culture, and we do not assume that the various use and exchange values which children, parents, and collectors project onto the doll can be neatly separated. Our primary use of this collectors's literature, though, has been to document the fashions and accessories produced to accompany Barbie.

Our analysis of Barbie fashions focused on the outfits' styles, their intended functions, accessories included with outfits, and the year(s) in which particular outfits and accessories were produced. The most significant accessory in the Barbie material world, clothing has been marketed in a wide range of forms. One of the two most common early forms was themed outfit "ensembles," with a full costume and appropriate accessories for a distinct activity (e.g., prom dates, cruise wear). The other form was in what are known as "Fashion Paks," collections of clothing articles (e.g., shoes) and accessories (e.g., cookware) which usually were not organized around a particular activity or given a unique Pak name. Until 1970, most clothing was marketed separately from dolls, which were sold in spare swimsuits; before then, only a few dolls came with clothing outfits or accessories. In the early 1970s some fashions began to be marketed with the doll as well as separately (Westenhouser, 1994, p. 37), and today many outfits are sold on dolls as well as in separate packages.

In comparison to the vast volume of clothing, a more modest number of playsets (e.g., houses), household goods (e.g., furniture), and vehicles (e.g., cars) were produced. DeWein and Ashabraner's (1977, pp. 231–239) inventory of 1959–1976 accessories identifies 43 playsets, 16 vehicles, and 32 furniture sets. Most nonclothing goods focus on a clear functional activity relating to fashions from the same period (e.g., a boat to accompany "The Yachtsman" or "Skin Diver" outfits). Our analysis focuses on the most widely marketed American products and does not consider the many foreign Barbies, especially rare domestic articles, or the vast quantity of books, records, stationery, and myriad other Barbie-endorsed commodities. Given the enormous quantity of fashion and play accessories produced for Barbie, we do not assume to have identified every permutation, but we certainly have included most Barbie clothing and accessories.

Domestic Symbolism and Barbie

Barbie material culture evokes a wide range of social issues which cannot be confined within any one neat category. Our analysis of Barbie's material world, however, suggests that the negotiation of domesticity has always been at the heart of Barbie's dominant symbolism. Mattel has attempted to structure the meaning

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of Barbie in very distinct ways which reproduce particular visions of domesticity. Domesticity invokes a host of shifting historical assumptions about labor structure, sexuality, materialism, and private and public space; in its most conservative formulations, domestic ideology reduces women's agency and subjectivity to their nurture and gratification of children's, husbands', and communities' social and emotional needs (on domestic ideology, cf. Abelson, 1989, pp. 19–20; Baker, 1984; Formanek-Brunell, 1993; Fox-Genovese, 1991, pp. 124–125; Matthews, 1987; Ogden, 1986). We are not suggesting that the packaged domestic symbolism which Mattel and various parents and collectors associate with Barbie has successfully "assimilated" all of the doll's consumers; in fact, Mattel's consistent transformation of Barbie suggests just the opposite. Barbie material culture instead reflects consistent transformation in (and struggles over) the definition of domesticity. Barbie is not a barometer to gauge American women's own visions of domesticity; indeed, the doll most clearly documents its producer's efforts to "sell" a vision of domesticity which has appeal to both children and their parents. Yet we should not interpret Mattel's constructions of Barbie domesticity as the isolated scheming of Mattel designers and marketers, because no production decision is detached from the context in which goods are consumed and given social symbolism: changes in Barbie material culture are a confluence of Mattel's ideological interests, their efforts to capture prevalent social sentiments in commodities, and the sociopolitical sentiments and subjectivities of many different consumers. Only the most encyclopedic account of popular culture since 1959 could hope to capture the full range of ways domestic ideology has been defined, reproduced, transformed, and resisted in the interim. Nevertheless, given that a Barbie is today sold somewhere in the world every 2 sec, the doll should provide a profound insight into the way generations of consumers have reproduced and negotiated domesticity.

The domestication of Barbie is not a straightforward evolutionary tale, nor has Barbie's domestic symbolism been monolithic or static over the nearly four decades since her introduction. Like any social transformation, Barbie's domestication is a complex account of ups and downs, internal tensions, forward progress, and backsliding. We found four basic chronological phases in the definition of Barbie's domesticity. The first phase was a period of minimal domesticity which began with Barbie's introduction in 1959 and lasted through her first 5 years. Initially, the doll provided a relatively empowering image of women's social and labor possibilities as well as evidence of the power of feminine sexuality. The second phase witnessed a sudden explosion of domesticity, beginning with Barbie's sixth year (1964) and ending with the last Barbie cookware pak in 1967. During this period Barbie reverted to a conservative ideological notion of a nurturing woman who performed domestic labor as the career and social options for boyfriend Ken expanded. The third phase (1968–1984) was virtually devoid of traditional domestic labor or clear personality attributes. Barbie shrank from the troubling contradictions of domesticity which were then under fire by feminist critique; instead, in a moment

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of considerable social unrest, she retreated to independent and stylish socializing with ambiguous politicized implications. In the most recent phase, since the mid-1980s, Barbie has been implicated in an intensive "backlash" domestication. Barbie has abandoned roles stressing agency and independence and lapsed into confining ideological identities as a mothering nurturer and homemaker.

These phases are not monolithic or always clearly separated in time, and Barbie never has been either utterly independent or completely subordinated. Even in her most reactionary moments, Barbie always has many activities, careers, and opportunities available to her: for instance, in 1965—arguably her year of most intensive domestication—Barbie also became an astronaut, almost two decades before NASA would follow suit. Nevertheless, during each of these periods the range of Barbie material culture clearly endorses a distinct construction of domesticity.

BARBIE DID NOT DO "ROUGH HOUSEWORK" (1959–1963)

Barbie hit the shelves on her "official birthday," March 9, 1959. Mattel creator Ruth Handler and fashion designer Charlotte Johnson crafted Barbie's image as carefully as they planned the doll's manufacturing. "Barbie, Teen-Age Fashion Model" was trumpeted by Mattel as

> an exciting, all-new kind of doll . . . she's shapely and grown-up . . . with fashion apparel authentic in every detail! This is Barbie: so curvy, flesh-toned and lifelike. She almost breathes, and stands alone. Girls of all ages will thrill to the fascination of her miniature wardrobe of fine-fabric fashions: tiny zippers that really zip . . . coats with luxurious, carefully tailored linings . . . jeweled earrings, necklaces and color-coordinated sun glasses! (*Barbie Bazaar*, 1994, p. 20)

Barbie's chief association was with high fashion. Ruth Handler (1994, p. 89) notes that the inspiration for Barbie styles came from designer Johnson, who "traveled regularly to the Paris fashion shows; such big names as Givenchy, Dior, and St. Laurent inspired many of those unforgettable Barbie outfits of the early years." Mattel's original Chief of Productions, Seymour Adler, noted that Johnson also "gleened [sic] many of her fashion ideas from a Sears Roebuck catalog which sat on her desk at Mattel" (Westenhouser, 1994, p. 29), yielding a distinctive array of high and everyday Barbie fashions. Unlike the mass of baby dolls populating toy stores, Barbie was an "adult" doll marketed in a box illustrated with designer fashion sketches of Barbie outfits, several of which had couture-sounding names, such as "Gay Parisienne" (Fig. 1). Barbie's stylish consumption, idealized labor discipline (i.e., in her modeling "career"), and clean-cut middle-class values found a mass of eager consumers among girls and their parents alike. As many critics suggested then and now, Barbie's construction of femininity was inseparable from her physical abundance and implied capability to use appearance to her advantage. Barbie's profound symbolic magnetism, however, rested upon something more compelling than her breasts, legs, or hair alone: Barbie was a career woman who

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Fig. 1. Fashion illustration sketches decorated Barbie boxes from 1959 to 1964. The box shown is from 1962.

symbolized genteel values, middle-class aspirations, impeccable style, and sexual self-determination.

Barbie's modeling career provided a sophisticated wardrobe, including a fur-trimmed brocade evening ensemble and formal ensembles for both day ("Plantation Belle") and evening ("Gay Parisienne," "Evening Splendour") wear. Yet Barbie's 22 original outfits could take her many places which were not focused on fashion. For instance, her options included the simple day dress "Cotton Casual" (Fig. 2)

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Fig. 2. Two of Barbie's original 22 fashions: "Cotton Casual" (left; 1959–1962, on circa 1963 Ponytail Barbie) and "Golden Girl" (right; 1959–1962, on circa 1963 Bubblecut Barbie).

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and a range of leisure wear, such as "Picnic Set's" jeans and checked cotton shirt and "Resort Set's" shorts and windbreaker. Two sets of underwear, one with a slim slip and the other with a bell-shaped petticoat, were marketed for wear beneath the stylish clothing. Mattel executives were sensitive that parents would not purchase Barbie if she appeared too sexualized, so the undergarments were blandly marketed as "Fashion Undergarments" and "Floral Petticoat": they were sold as necessary underclothing which was the obligatory prelude to dress rather than undress.

This complex wardrobe was conceptualized as a teaching tool, an idealized assemblage of fashions which would instruct young middle-class (or aspiring middle-class) girls how to dress for various occasions, what those occasions should be, and how to behave in those settings (Schwartz, 1997, pp. 43–44). Fashions clearly were marketed for specific social contexts: e.g., when Barbie embarked on a cruise, she wore "Cruise Stripes"; on a picnic, "Picnic Set"; to go shopping, "Suburban Shopper." Barbie also had one career outfit, "Commuter Set," a conservative navy suit that came with both a blue blouse for the office and a white satin shell for a quick change to evening wear. Mattel advertising stressed the "instructive" role of these outfits as a mechanism to persuade mothers who were uneasy with Barbie's exaggerated adult figure and costumes. During testing before the doll went on sale, marketing researcher Ernest Dichter zeroed in on parental apprehension and used it to design the subsequent marketing strategy:

> Convince Mom that Barbie will make a "poised little lady" out of her raffish, unkempt, possibly boyish child. Underscore the outfits' detailing, and the way it might teach a roughneck to accessorize. Remind Mom what she believes deep down but dares not express: Better her daughter should appeal in a sleazy way to a man than be unable to attract one at all. (Lord, 1994, pp. 40–41)

According to Dichter's research, two of the outfits that made mothers the most uneasy were "Nighty-Negligee" and "Sweater Girl." The former was indeed risque: it consisted of a strapless, floor-length gown in see-through pink nylon, Grecian-style cording delineating Barbie's breasts, and a matching *peignoir* (Fig. 3). "I object to that sexy costume," one mother stated, noting, "I wouldn't walk around the house like that" (Lord, 1994, p. 39). Mattel inelegantly attempted to soften the sexiness of the outfit by including a pink stuffed dog, confounding the suggestion about whom the negligee-clad Barbie actually was cuddling. "Sweater Girl" was equally problematic, its name evoking sweater-clad Hollywood starlets like Lana Turner whose taut knitwear showcased their breasts. One concerned mother indicated that "maybe the bride doll is O.K., but not the one with the sweater" (Lord, 1994, p. 39). As with the "Nighty-Negligee" poodle, distracting accessories were included with the outfit: a pair of scissors, bowl of yarn, and *How to Knit* book, objects which deflected attention from Barbie's breasts to craft skills. In both cases, Mattel seemingly encouraged consumers to imagine Barbie as innocent, sexy, or—more likely—both simultaneously.

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Fig. 3. Mothers disapproved of "Nighty Negligee" (1959–1964, on 1962 Bubblecut Barbie).

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"Sweater Girl" was 1 of only 3 of Barbie's original 22 outfits which placed Barbie in any domestic labor. The sweater ensemble's knitting kit suggested that she could knit, but this outfit can be interpreted in several, not necessarily exclusive ways. First, knitting is a traditional household production skill, so it could imply Barbie's conventional domesticity. Second, Barbie's craft could somewhat conversely be seen as creative ingenuity, an imagination in tune with her interest in fashion and aspiration to a world outside the home and family. Third, the knitting accessories may simply have been a smirking cover-up of Barbie's "real" identity as Hollywood pinup, a sexual siren concealed in the guise of domesticated seamstress.

What Mattel intended the outfit to signify is almost irrelevant, because "Sweater Girl" and other outfits were sufficiently ambiguous to evoke somewhat contradictory symbolic associations. The other 2 "domestic" outfits in the original line of 22 are equally ambiguous. "Suburban Shopper," for instance, came with a small tote bag of fruit suggesting a trip to the market, but the tote was somewhat incongruous with the accompanying crisp sundress, straw hat, and pearl necklace. The fruit in the tote bag may have been whimsical decoration, a decorative accessory which was carried along on a shopping excursion to a fashion designer's showroom rather than the grocery store. This seemingly uncommon mix of elements in a single outfit would provide a somewhat unusual model for an adult, but for a child playing with "Suburban Shopper" this was likely not such an incongruity. For children, some of the most glaring disparities between "real life" and Barbie were likely unimportant because play itself assumes a fundamentally imaginative dimension and a loose relationship with "reality." For parents, Barbie play may be considered a process of learning and reproducing dominant social values through role simulation, and Ernest Dichter counseled Mattel to market the doll to parents as such a role-play tool. For children, on the other hand, play is not simply instrumental role mimicry; instead, it embraces imaginative make-believe which can suspend or redefine predominant social values and practice (on play, see Dant, 1998, pp. 79–84).

The remaining domestic outfit, "Barbie-Q," placed Barbie in an apron whose pockets were filled with barbecue utensils and a potholder. Susan Willis (1991, p. 98) reduces this outfit to evidence of Barbie's thorough and historically static domesticity, but Barbie's chef hat and the name of the outfit imply that the context is entertaining, not cooking as a daily labor. Indeed, barbecuing itself is so heavily contextualized as a male activity that Barbie may actually have usurped male privilege by seizing control of the grill.

The attraction of outfits like "Barbie-Q" is that they paradoxically implied a predictable social stability as well as radically novel possibilities (cf. Muggleton, 1997, p. 186). "Barbie-Q" harbors elements of a rational and calculated vision of traditional domesticity, but it also concedes other social roles. This amalgam of contradictory symbolisms is typical of the most compelling toys: their idealized symbolism may be uniform, predictable, and conservative, but to maintain their

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allure they provide some means to imagine new possibilities within (and sometimes against) dominant symbolism. Barbie socializes children, but toys discipline a child through imaginative play in which the consumer is expected to exploit the symbolic richness of the commodity. Nevertheless, it is critical to acknowledge that commodities like Barbie usually are not wielded as revolutionary means to transform society instrumentally; instead, their consumption more often envisions modest changes (e.g., female barbecuing) with potentially significant implications (e.g., women's control of a male space).

Even though she was not conceived as a protofeminist toy, Barbie's negligible domestication was no accident. The women in charge of her image, Ruth Handler and Charlotte Johnson, were both career women themselves, and they envisioned Barbie in their image. For instance, M. G. Lord (1994, p. 10) reports that Handler rejected a vacuum cleaner firm's offer to produce a vacuum scaled to Barbie's size because Barbie did not engage in what Charlotte Johnson referred to as "rough housework." By that time, neither did Handler, who acknowledges in her autobiography that "domestic chores bored me silly." In 1959 she informed an interviewer that "if I had to stay home I would be the most dreadful, mixed-up, unhappy woman in the world" (Handler, 1994, p. 47).

Through 1963, 39 additional outfits and over 36 Fashion Paks were introduced for Barbie. Several more careers were introduced: e.g., fashion designer ("Busy Gal"), nightclub chanteuse ("Solo in the Spotlight"), "American Airlines Stewardess," "Registered Nurse," "Ballerina," and "Career Girl." Domestic activities remained uncommon. The ambiguously domestic "Barbie-Q," "Suburban Shopper," and "Sweater Girl" were available through 1962. In 1963, Barbie tackled childcare in "Barbie Baby-Sits." Lord (1994, p. 50) reports that the set was designed in response to children's requests for a baby for Barbie. They got one, but every effort was made to emphasize that Barbie was the antithesis of a young housewife as she cared for the baby. Her apron, for instance, was conspicuously labeled "Babysitter." A clock was included, implying that this was a temporary, time-bound wage labor which was a means to unstated consumer ends. There was also a telephone so that Barbie was not isolated in her task and, perhaps most telling, three books for her to study: *How to Travel*, *How to Get a Raise*, and *How to Lose Weight*. While the fact that she was caring for a baby could be interpreted as preparing her for inevitable maternity, Barbie's reading material pointed to a life as a slim, world-traveling career woman, much like designer Charlotte Johnson herself.

Barbie's ultimate fashion accessory, Ken, was introduced in 1961, a move Mattel attributes to consumer demand (Mandeville, 1990a). Letters to Mattel indicated that girls wanted Barbie to have a boyfriend, and Mattel complied, albeit somewhat reluctantly. Handler (1994, p. 89) realized that "boy dolls" had a long history of failure in the toy industry, but Mattel pushed ahead because subservient male dolls like Ken "were needed for love interests, dates, proms, and the like!" To circumvent the potential for seeing Ken as a sexual threat, he was modeled on a rather bland "boy next door" ideal (Mandeville, 1990a, pp. 24–25).

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Compared with Barbie's wardrobe, Ken's garb was relatively limited, with his first year's offerings including just nine outfits and the swim trunks which came with the doll. Unlike Barbie, who was conceived as a working fashion model, Ken had no career wear in his first 2 years. "Campus Hero," for instance, implied that Ken was a college student, and most of his remaining outfits were designed to squire Barbie in a variety of settings (e.g., "Casuals," "Sport Shorts," "Dreamboat," "Saturday Date," "Tuxedo") (Fig. 4). When Ken was not dressed to accompany

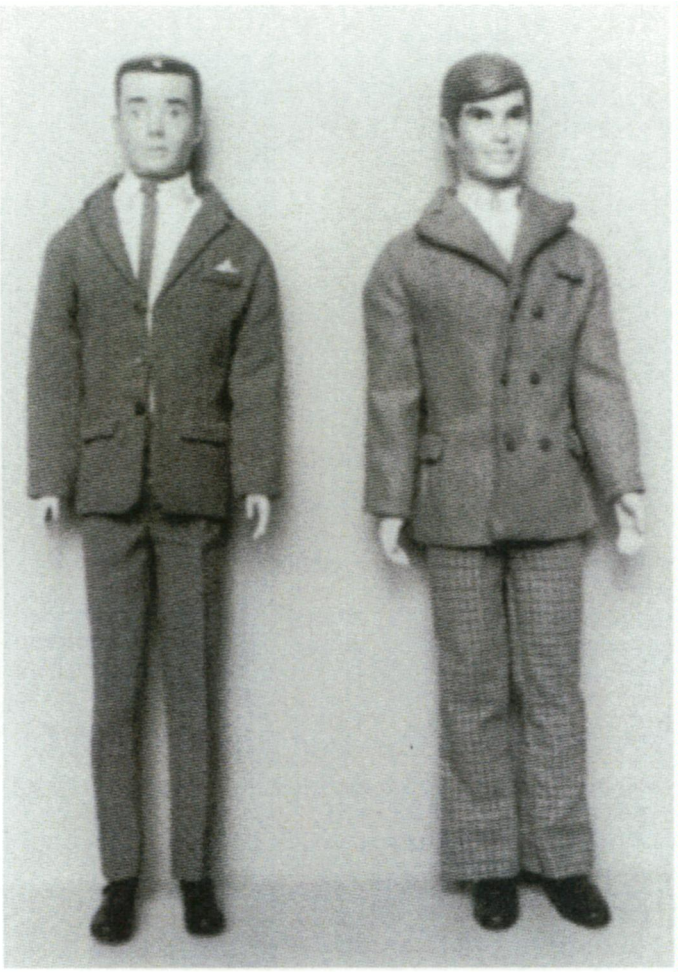

Fig. 4. Ken in his primary role as Barbie escort: in "Saturday Date" (left; 1963 Fashion Queen Barbie and Ken Trousseau Set version, on 1963 Ken) and "Town Turtle" (right; 1969–1970, on 1969–1970 Talking Ken).

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Barbie on a social expedition, he was preparing himself for his role as Barbie's escort: outfits like "In Training" included barbells and a *How to Build Muscles* book, and "Terry Togs" included a razor, comb, and grooming supplies. Ken's tenth outfit was a set of sedate pajamas. No household activities were implied either in the names of his outfits or the accessories included. In his second year (1962), Ken's wardrobe added several upper-class sporting activities which were not exclusively male activities or hypermasculinized, such as "Time for Tennis," "Yachtsman," and "Rally Day." Until 1963, Ken's fashions contain absolutely no evidence of career or domestic activity.

In 1963 "Sweater Girl" appeared in a new color and was renamed "Knitting Pretty," replacing the emphasis on Barbie's breasts with one on knitting itself. Considerably more dramatic Ken wardrobe changes presaged shifting domestic symbolism for Barbie. The once-staid Ken apparently received a testosterone boost which suggested that he had a life beyond service to Barbie. No longer just a vaguely sporty collegiate escort, Ken participated for the first time in exclusively male-gendered sports which Barbie could not join in, such as boxing ("Boxing"), football ("Touchdown"), and baseball ("Play Ball") (*Barbie Bazaar*, 1994, pp. 81, 87; Eames, 1990, p. 70). Energized by his entrance into masculine sport, Ken also joined the military ("Sailor" and "Army and Airforce"), he became a doctor ("Dr. Ken"), and he acquired a rifle, a plaid shirt, a red cap, and black boots for hunting season ("Hunting Shirt") (Eames, 1990, p. 71) (Fig. 5). As Ken became more overtly macho, Barbie stood poised to descend into unambiguous domesticity for the first time.

RETURN TO THE DOMESTIC IDEAL (1964–1967)

Something happened to Barbie beginning in 1964. Part of the change was technologically driven: starting that year, Barbie for the first time had bendable legs, making her more posable and "life like" than ever. But the major shift was ideological, as Barbie for the first time did "rough housework" and performed domestic labor. The shift was not complete or unopposed. Barbie continued to explore workplace options, such as "Fashion Editor," "Student Teacher," "Junior Designer," "Modern Art"-ist, and even an unglamorous but forward-thinking "Miss Astronaut" accompanied by male astronaut Ken. Yet alongside this freedom came a dose of domestic drudgery for the first time. For instance, the "Junior Designer" introduced in 1965 ironed her creations with an accompanying miniature iron (Eames, 1990, p. 129). From the beginning Barbie had cooked for guests at a "Barbie-Q," but the new "What's Cookin?" pak focused on culinary preparation itself rather than socializing: composed of an apron and a variety of utensils such as potholders, rolling pins, and ladles, the pak evoked kitchen labor, not entertaining (Eames, 1990, p. 82). Worst of all, the central accessory in the "Leisure Hours" pak was a broom, suggesting that Barbie considered sweeping a recreation (Eames, 1990, p. 80).

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Fig. 5. Barbie gets left home when Ken is "Goin' Huntin'" (1964, on 1963 Ken).

Significantly, Ken began to add careers during this period. Ken remained predominantly a conventional persona as, variously, a conservative fraternity boy (e.g., "Campus Corduroys," "Fraternity Meeting," "Campus Hero"), country club aspirant ("Country Clubbin'"), and escort ("Tuxedo"), but the doll's fashions

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increasingly suggested a men's world beyond campus and service to Barbie (*Barbie Bazaar*, 1994, pp. 149–150). For example, Ken could aspire to be an "American Airlines Captain," a role which was paralleled by Barbie in her "American Airlines Stewardess" uniform (*Barbie Bazaar*, 1994, p. 148). "Dr. Ken" also was paralleled by "Registered Nurse" Barbie, again placing Barbie in a subordinant labor position (*Barbie Bazaar*, 1994, p. 148). In 1964, Barbie's medical labor status declined even further when she became a "Candy Striper Volunteer," an unskilled and unpaid service laborer toting a wax watermelon and glass of orange juice (Eames, 1990, p. 84). Promotional depictions of Ken and Barbie began to place Ken in similar positions of influence over and independence from Barbie for the first time. For instance, as the couple took to the water in their new speedboat, Ken piloted the craft in "The Yachtsman" outfit as Barbie sat beside him in her two-piece "Skin-Diver" garb (*Barbie Bazaar*, 1994, p. 165). Ken piloted the Barbie Sports Plane, as well. Ken also continued his foray into spaces and activities which were gender-exclusive, such as masculine sports and hunting, a trend which intensified in subsequent years.

In 1965 the domestic trend intensified. Barbie still served food to guests in "Hostess Set," "Invitation to Tea," and "Brunchtime," but she also cooked it in "Barbie Learns to Cook" and the return of "What's Cooking?" (*Barbie Bazaar*, 1994, p. 212). Barbie's ever-expanding line of accessories included a dream house, living room, and new "Dream Kitchen-Dinette." Mattel trumpeted that the nearly 2-ft-long Kitchen-Dinette was "JUST LIKE REAL! RIGHT DOWN TO THE SILVERWARE, DISHES, POTS, AND PANS!" (*Barbie Bazaar*, 1994, p. 223). The thoroughly accessorized kitchen included cutlery, plates, coffee percolator, casseroles, saucepans, and a toaster with toast (Miller, 1994, p. 27). Girls playing with the set also could look forward to "more fun making curtains, tablecloth and napkins in beautiful SEW-FREE fabric." The 1965 Sears catalog advertised the Kitchen-Dinette alongside three "Busy Homemaker Outfits": "Barbie Learns to Cook," "Brunch Time," and "Cookie Time," the latter designed for sister Skipper (*Barbie Bazaar*, 1994, p. 237; Eames, 1990, p. 149). "Barbie Learns to Cook" illuminates the contradictions in the transition from independent socialite to domesticated homebody: beyond the pak's title (which implied that Barbie had no culinary training), the clothing included a conservative knee-length dress and somewhat incongruous high heels. Predictably, the ensemble included several pots and pans and a toaster alongside the cookbook *Barbie Easy as Pie* (Eames, 1990, p. 135).

By this point, the spatial universe for which Mattel sold Barbie playsets and accessories ranged over every element of household space from the kitchen to living room to boudoir. It also extended nurturing qualities to other nonhousehold spaces, such as "Skipper's Schoolroom," in which teacher Barbie instructed sister Skipper and her friends Skooter and Ricky. Once focused on high fashion alone, Barbie was assuming a seemingly diverse functional "life" in various spaces, but that life did not include any particularly subversive roles and attributes. Barbie had a "Campus" playset (introduced in 1964), a school where Barbie "gets all A's," but the playset was devoid of a classroom: the campus instead included a dorm room,

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sweet shop, drive-in movie, and football stadium (*Barbie Bazaar*, 1994, pp. 162–163, 238). Barbie also went shopping in the "Fashion Shop" playset, which was introduced in 1963 and mimicked clothiers in upscale fashion districts (*Barbie Bazaar*, 1994, p. 89). In the midst of an increasingly unsettled and politicized public discourse ranging across class inequality, Vietnam, and feminism, Barbie took a conservative, utopian look to a settled society with clear gender roles and settled politics.

"Barbie Baby-Sits" underwent a fundamental and symptomatic change as Barbie's get-ahead books were replaced by a babysitting manual and a recipe for formula (Eames, 1990, p. 142). The items that marked babysitting as a job—the Babysitter apron and the clock—disappeared and were replaced by a layette and baby care items. Even the phone was gone. This babysitter was no longer the antithesis of a *Feminine Mystique* housewife but the very image of one isolated and without dreams of a glamorous future (Friedan 1983). In 1966—the very year Betty Friedan led the formation of the National Organization for Women—Mattel introduced several similar housewife-themed paks. "Coffee's On," for example, included a plain butterfly print dress with ric-rac trim and a bare casserole and coffee maker (Eames, 1990, p. 170). These accessories suggested not the elegant hostess, but a single isolated housewife languishing in the kitchen waiting for a neighbor to drop by for a gossipy *kaffe klatsch*. "Lunchtime" included the same dress from the "Barbie Learns to Cook" ensemble but paired it with a spare saucepan, a tea kettle, a toaster, and two slices of toast (Eames, 1990, p. 171). "Kitchen Magic" likewise was simply bare accessories: three pans, a toaster with toast, and a coffee maker (Eames, 1990, p. 161). As its name implies, "Set 'N Serve" presented a similarly narrow range of play possibilities: the assemblage included just placemats, plates, cups, saucers, cutlery, casseroles, and a teapot. The Barbie using these objects was merely performing household service. There were few ways to redefine the function of objects like toasters and pans, and their design did not offer a rich source of symbolic possibilities. The last of the cooking paks was produced in 1967, the year before Barbie went "Mod."

DISAPPEARANCE OF DOMESTICITY (1968–CIRCA 1984)

The late 1960s marked another major shift in Barbie's world when she went "Mod." Her formerly elegant but basically conservative wardrobe exploded in a riot of trendy neon colors and psychedelic swirls in combinations such as fuschia and tangerine ("Fringe Benefits") (Eames, 1997, p. 161) (Fig. 6). Carnaby Street fashions inspired skirts in mini, midi, and maxi lengths, along with hip culottes and wild-printed tights. Starting in 1966, thinner, smaller-chested Mod cousins and friends also appeared alongside the newly Mod Barbie (Fig. 7). Their figures illustrated a new female bodily ideal personified by Barbie's new best friend Twiggy, a doll based on the popular stick-thin model.

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Fig. 6. Mod Era colors: "Fringe Benefits" mixed fuschia and tangerine (left; 1971–1972, lacking long fringed boots, on 1968–1969 Talking Stacey doll) and "Twinkle Togs" added red striping to metallic blue and lime green (right; 1968–1969, on 1970 Twist 'N Turn Barbie).

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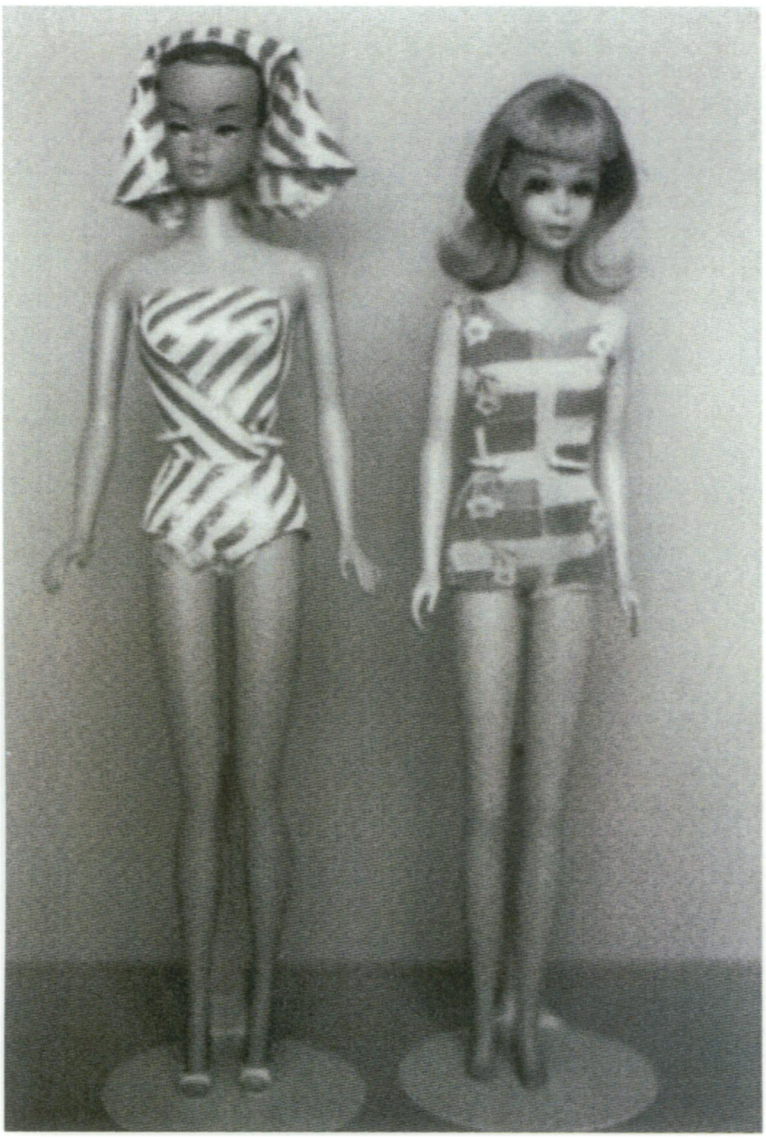

Fig. 7. The 1966 Francie (right; in original swimsuit) was thinner and flatter-chested than her "cousin" Barbie (left; 1963 Fashion Queen Barbie in original swimsuit).

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Barbie's new, slimmer friends gave a nod to current fashions and shifting bodily ideals. Nevertheless, Jacqueline Urla and Alan Swedlund's (1995) anthropometric study of Barbie's bodily dimensions reveals empirically inconsequential change in the doll's fundamental proportions over 40 years. Despite Mattel's persistent announcements about changes in Barbie's body (e.g., Borger, 1997, p. 40), Urla and Swedlund's measurements of a series of Barbies produced since 1959 show that Barbie's proportions have never changed in any appreciable way. An anthropometric study of Barbies by Kevin Norton and co-workers (1996) confirms Urla and Swedlund's conclusions: Norton *et al.* found that the probability that a life-size woman would have Barbie's proportions was less than 1 in 100,000. Over a few years leading up to the Mod era, several relatively cosmetic bodily transformations occurred: bendable legs (1964), different-toned vinyl (1966 or 1967), a twist waist (1967), and an almost totally new face (1967). All that remained of the "old" Barbie by 1967 was her unmistakable proportions and coy, side-glancing blue eyes. Mattel may have retained Barbie's figure so consumers would not be compelled to buy a completely new wardrobe, but they had no such compunction about Ken's body. Ken disappeared briefly in 1967, but he returned in 1968 with a physique so beefed-up he could no longer fit into his earlier outfits (cf. Mandeville, 1990b) (Fig. 8).

New Mod fashions ceased linking their "educational" role to a specific social space or activity. For instance, it had been obvious where to wear "Sorority Meeting" and "Movie Date," fashions which linked a particular social space with a set of disciplinary behaviors. In contrast, there was no obvious space to sport outfits like the abstract green and orange "Two-Way Tiger" or the multicolored "Sunflower" dress with snake bracelets and oversized drop earrings (Blitman, 1996, pp. 9, 148). Lord (1994, p. 62) argues that Mattel ceased linking outfit names to specific activities to evade facing what teenagers were actually up to in the late 1960s: "It was as if Mattel didn't dare admit where a real college student might wear such clothes—to march in Washington against the war, to drop acid at a Jefferson Airplane concert, or to light up a joint while occupying the president's office at Columbia University."

As Lord suggests, Mattel likely was reluctant to imbue Barbie with a hint of sociopolitics in the late-1960s. Nevertheless, this effort to distance Barbie from social and political consciousness was nothing new. After all, Mattel had made it through the early sixties without any "Beatnik Coffeehouse" or "Desegregation Riot" outfits, preferring to imagine Barbie at a staid "Lunch on the Terrace" or apolitical "Music Center Matinee" (Fig. 9). Barbie was a target of politicized discourses from the outset, but Mattel always has resisted conceding that the doll itself has any political import. It would be naive to suggest that a company as shrewd and sensitive to consumer perception as Mattel simply ignored public critique and late-1960s social unrest. In 1970, a modest but symptomatic reflection of shifting sentiments came at the Women's Strike for Equality when a young girl raised a sign reading "I AM NOT A BARBIE DOLL" (Faludi, 1991, p. xxiii). Mattel executives

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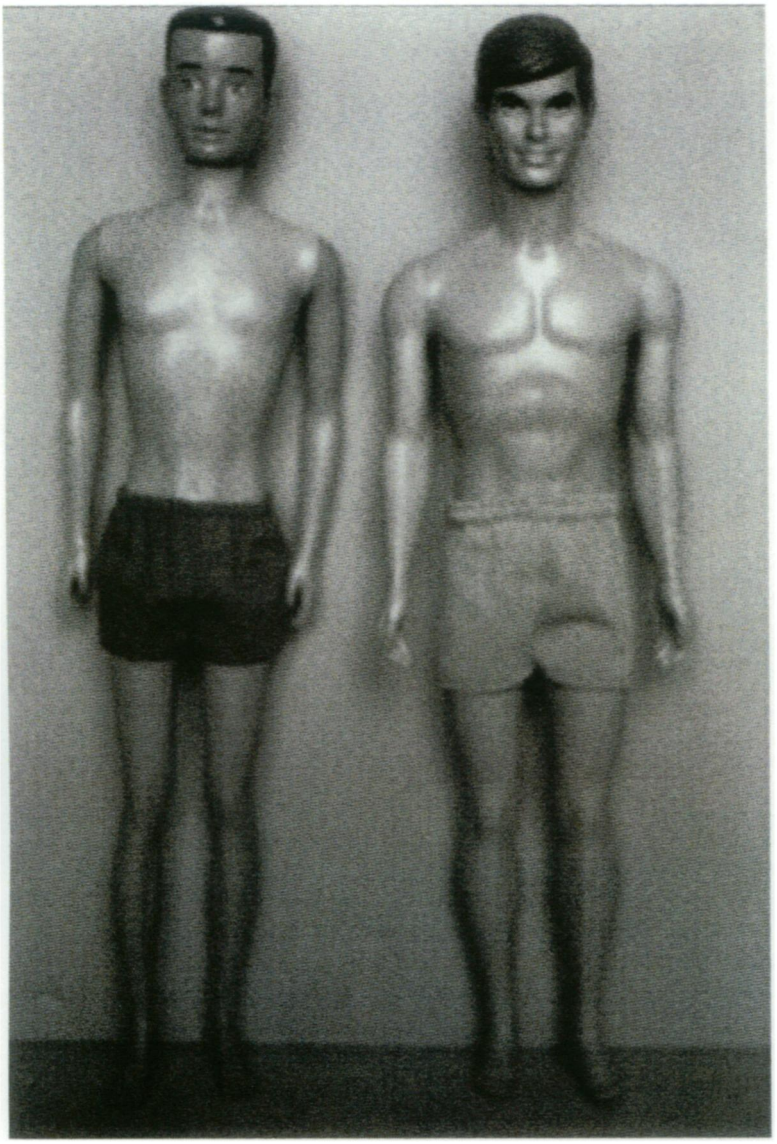

Fig. 8. Ken's new physique (right; 1969–1970 Talking Ken) was too beefed-up to fit into his earlier version's clothing (left; 1963 Ken).

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Fig. 9. Where Barbie spent the 1960s: "Music Center Matinee" (left; 1966–1967, on 1963 Fashion Queen Barbie) and "Lunch on the Terrace" (right; 1966–1967, on 1966 American Girl Barbie).

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undoubtedly made now-unacknowledged "business" decisions about Barbie and Barbie accessories in the late 1960s which aspired to defuse such sentiments. Providing Barbie more ambiguous roles and more assertively refocusing play options on fashion and style was a circumspect production strategy in this highly charged historical moment.

Late-1960s and early-1970s Barbie material culture reflects an increasing emphasis on ambiguous leisure activities. Disappearing along with outfits named for social events were both career-inspired clothing and clothes suggesting domestic activity. Through at least 1976, for instance, there were no cooking paks. As with Barbie's clothing, Ken's fashions were no longer geared to labor, instead constructing a stylish man of leisure. Ken did have a few ensemble paks like the 1970 "Big Business" outfit, a houndstooth double-breasted jacket and matching pants, but it did not refer to a distinct occupation.

Barbie's symbolic possibilities expanded anew because the most narrowly defined functional accessories were removed from the market. The social implications of these play options also shifted. The doll did not revert to the world of late-1950s high fashion and feminine style archetypes like Jacqueline Kennedy on which Barbie was based. By the late 1960s, the founts of style were no longer a handful of elite women like Kennedy, whose remarriage to a Greek tycoon fatally undermined her status as an American social and stylistic archetype (Lord, 1994, p. 61). Style likewise was distanced from the class-specific metropolitan centers of late-1950s high-fashion designers; instead, fashion increasingly flowed from the streets and popular culture. The stunning aesthetics of Mod clothing were a clear display of stylistic distinction, an utterly politicized statement of generational and sociopolitical difference. Barbie's bright Mod clothing and flashy accessories evoked ambiguous social spaces and labor roles which were certainly no less empowering and definitely more relevant than those embodied by the preceding cooking packs and college garb. Barbie did not explicitly embrace Leftist politics, but Mod fashion at least made such play options a more likely possibility.

As the 1970s progressed, Mod subsided into the California casual styles known as "Malibu," which deny any pretense of chic (Fig. 10). Barbie's new tan skintone, beach buggy, and camper suggested an active, outdoor lifestyle, as did a new friend, Yellowstone Kelley (Eames, 1997, p. 285). As her 1974 box depicted, Kelley cooked, but her meals were prepared over an open fire. Barbie did not explicitly work between 1968 and 1973, presumably spending all of her time socializing, shopping, or at the beach.

Mattel itself underwent radical transformations in the early 1970s. After several years of diversifying the company beyond toys alone, Mattel posted a $29.9 million loss in 1972 (Lord, 1994, pp. 92–93). Mattel stockholders filed a lawsuit against the company in 1973 amidst circuitous earnings statements from company executives including founders Ruth and Eliot Handler. By 1974, Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) investigators reported significant misstatements of earnings in the 1971 and 1972 financial reports and suspended trade of Mattel

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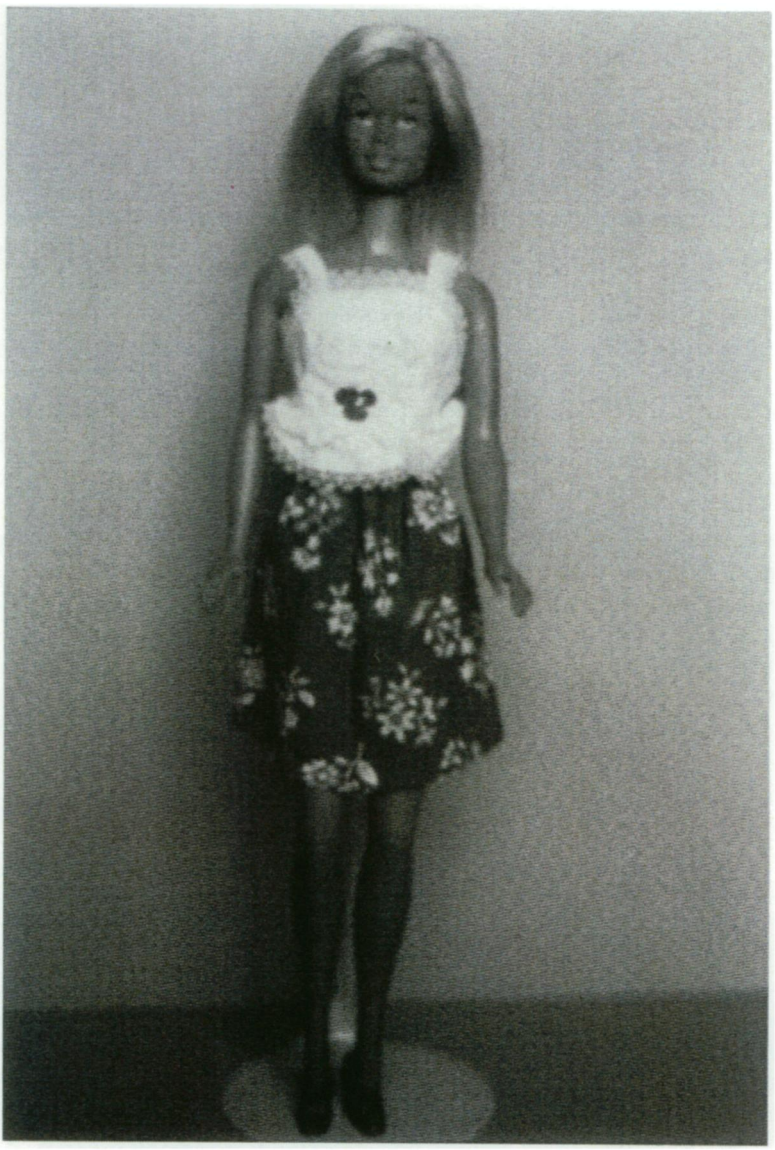

Fig. 10. Malibu Barbie (1971) goes California casual in a circa 1975 Best Buy outfit.

stock. In October 1974 the SEC forced Mattel to compose a board of directors whose majority came from outside the present company ranks. The Handlers were expelled, and in 1978 Ruth pleaded no contest to charges that she falsified a series of financial records to inflate Mattel stock prices.

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In the midst of this transformation in Mattel's power structure, there were rumors of Barbie's demise as the newly reconfigured company contemplated moving on to more timely toys. Facing a dramatic challenge, the doll slowly was returned to more conservative domestic symbolism. In 1973, for instance, career outfits made a reappearance. For the first time since 1967, consumers were encouraged to pretend Barbie had a job: the "Get-Ups 'n Go" line of clothing included outfits for a stewardess, ballerina, and, for the first time, doctor (Eames, 1997, pp. 266–267). The same line of clothes included doctor's and airline pilot's outfits for Ken as well (Eames, 1997, pp. 271–272). In 1974 Barbie returned to babysitting, with a "Barbie Doll Babysits" set marketed exclusively at Sears (Eames, 1997, p. 285). An apron, a gown, a bonnet, a baby bathtub, bottles, rattles, and a baby were parts of the set that marked Barbie's return to perhaps the most domestic of labors. Since the reintroduction of careers in 1973, Barbie has remained steadily employed; the underside of Barbie's reentry into labor space has been that she is increasingly responsible for domestic duties as well.

SECOND-SHIFT BARBIE (CIRCA 1984–PRESENT)

Barbie today has "So Much to Do." Not only does she have multiple careers (e.g., "Pet Doctor," "Doctor," "Ballerina," "Teacher," "Police Officer"), but she is expected to cook and clean feverishly in her "second shift." For instance, the "3 in 1 Super Set!" "Barbie Fun Fixin' Dinner Set" assumes that Barbie will do the shopping, cooking, and serving, leaving it unclear who is actually eating. Other playsets encourage Barbie to bake, barbecue, prepare breakfast, and garden. Vacuum cleaners are now available for Barbie, along with brooms, feather dusters, and "heavy" cleaning supplies with brand sponsors, such as Pledge, Formula 409, Pine Sol, and Easy-On oven cleaner ("So Much To Do! Cleanin' House" playset). As boxes in Mattel's "So Much To Do" series enthuse, "Barbie just can't sit still when there's so much to do!"

This newly conservative Barbie domesticity certainly has a connection to 1980s social shifts which are reflected most clearly in the ascendance of the evangelical Right and Ronald Reagan's 1980 Presidential victory. Support for the Equal Rights Amendment, for instance, peaked in 1981, only to drop quickly off the partisan political agenda, face withering critique in the popular press, and rapidly lose public support (Faludi, 1991, p. xix). Influenced by a heightened moral atmosphere, a wave of popular commentators launched various studies linking a vast range of social dilemmas to feminism and advocating a return to traditional women's roles. The redomesticated 1980s Barbie was not simply the product of Ronald Reagan and a handful of allied ideologues; after all, a conservative rejoinder to feminism emerged in the mid-1970s, particularly in the media-savvy form of writer Phyllis Schafly (Ogden, 1986, pp. 207–210). Perhaps more importantly, Mattel presaged such sentiments with its own gradual embrace of traditional domesticity in the mid-1970s, so the rise of a public and conservative Right in the 1980s likely fanned

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Barbie's redomestication. The politics of Mattel itself are zealously guarded (or denied altogether), but Barbie's 1980s embrace of cooking, cleaning, and comparable domestic tasks suggests their conservative corporate vision of femininity. At the very least, many Barbie consumers and Mattel are wary of being labeled feminist: they do not see themselves radically transforming society's bedrock structure as much as they are celebrating a universe of preexisting women's aspirations and timeless "feminine" attributes (cf. Lord, 1994, pp. 90–91).

In addition to her expanded household labor tasks, Barbie now cares for her Baby Sister Kelly as part of her domestic chores. Kelly comes with Barbie in "Stroller Fun Barbie and Kelly," "Shoppin' Fun Barbie and Kelly," and "Birthday Party Barbie and Kelly." Kelly also can be purchased separately as "Bathtime Fun," "Bedtime Fun," and "Potty Training Kelly," in which "You and Barbie feed Kelly her bottle, then put her on her potty. Squeeze her tummy and she really tinkles! . . . Uh oh! When accidents happen, diaper bag opens into a mat and you can change Kelly doll's wet diaper!" In keeping with the traditional vision of domesticity as motherhood or personal nurturing, Kelly's childcare labor is presented as endless satisfaction if not "fun," as the playset names emphasize. The exception is "Potty Training Kelly": apparently even Mattel drew the line at calling toddler's toilet instruction "fun." There is no hint that Barbie receives even an allowance for this labor, instead seeking what Elizabeth Fox-Genovese (1991, p. 124) calls "the selfless gratification of nurture."

In the early 1980s Mattel shifted its Barbie production and sales strategy, marketing dolls for play focused on particular activities, such as hair style, recreation, and glamour (Lord, 1994, p. 112). Different dolls were sold with functionally distinct clothing and accessories which targeted certain girls's activities in the hope that consumers would purchase multiple dolls for different sorts of functionally focused role play. The 1982 "Magic Curl Barbie," for instance, had densely curled hair which girls were expected to wash and style, providing a sharply focused play activity (Westenhauser, 1994, p. 112). Similarly, "Rocker Barbie" was among a series of 1984–1985 "Rocker" dolls dressed in new-wave dance fashions and accompanied by cassettes with original songs (Summers, 1997, pp. 79–82). Instead of owning one or two dolls alongside a large assemblage of clothing and accessories, Mattel hoped that consumers would purchase numerous functionally distinct, stylistically individual dolls. This strategy to increase doll consumption apparently has been utterly triumphant: Mattel believes that over 95% of American girls between 3 and 11 years of age own at least one Barbie, and the average number of Barbies in any assemblage is seven or eight (Chamberlain, 1995, p. 57; Shapiro, 1992). In the midst of this marketing shift, Mattel fought through a series of economic setbacks which could be erased only by Barbie sales, increasing the doll's already monumental importance to the company. In 1996, Barbie accounted for $1.7 billion in sales, nearly 40% of Mattel's total revenues of $4.5 billion (Morgenson, 1997, p. 46).

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In the 1980s, Mattel continued its well-established pattern of accessorizing Barbie with all sorts of consumer goods. Increasingly in the 1980s, Barbie's outfits and accessories embraced narrowly defined domestic roles. In 1984, for example, Barbie had a "Dream Kitchen" complete with oven, sink, refrigerator, trash compactor, and over 80 food and cooking accessories (Summers, 1997, p. 170), and the 1987 "Sweet Roses" furniture line included a cooking center. To a consumer, accessories like the "Sweet Roses" furniture probably seemed necessary purchases for Barbie's various houses: unlike earlier houses, since the late 1970s structures were not sold with furniture. Barbie consumers were compelled to outfit these playsets with accessories such as the 1990 "Pink Sparkles," which expanded Barbie's household duties by giving her a "Wash & Watch" dishwasher and battery-operated "Washer & Dryer" (Summers, 1997, pp. 167, 174). The very name of the "Wash & Watch" playset indicates Barbie's increasing domesticity: it suggested that simply *watching* dishes being washed was entertainment.

The doll's increasing links to branded items amplified Barbie's longstanding investment in consumption. Born in the late 1950s to the flood of baby-boomer teens with disposable consumer income, Barbie profits always thrived on the marketing of a universe of accessories. Barbie has become a significantly more focused shopper since the mid-1980s, though, as her interest turned from goods and shopping in general to specific brands. Some early dolls and accessories were sold as store exclusives available only at a particular chain, but the absence of distinct trademarks on those goods undermines much of the attraction of brands. Sears and Roebuck, for instance, sold the first store-exclusive product in 1964 when it offered a genuine mink stole (Westenhouser, 1994, p. 144), but the stole had no obvious Sears identification. Before the 1980s, Barbie's most notable brand endorsements were for mid-1960s airlines (Arend, 1995): American Airlines captain and stewardess outfits appeared in 1963–1964, Pan American Airways produced its own stewardess outfit in 1966 (Eames, 1990, p. 173), and Braniff airlines produced a set of four outfits as well as a pilot's uniform (Eames, 1990, pp. 220–221). Few brand commodities were endorsed by Barbie before the 1980s: for instance, in 1964, the "Candy Striper Volunteer" outfit included a tiny box of Kleenex tissues (Eames, 1990, p. 84); around 1965, the "Skipper Linen Closet" playset included boxes of All and Lux detergents, Coets tissue, and Northern toilet paper (Arend *et al.*, 1998, p. 91); the rare early to mid-1960s set "Barbie Shops by Phone" included packages of Sun Maid raisins, Rice Krispies, River White rice, Domino sugar, Kellogg's Corn Flakes, Beechnut gum, and Luden's cough drops, and a Dupont sponge (Scherzer, 1997, p. 23); and in 1974 outfits for Skipper and Francie included bell-bottom pants and tops emblazoned with the Pepsi trademark.

In 1983 Barbie embarked on more intensive and visible brand consumption with the introduction of the "Barbie Loves McDonald's" playset, which was outfitted with hamburgers, french fries, and other McDonald's offerings (Summers,

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1997, p. 159). In 1984–1985 Mattel added a series of high-style dresses "From the Collection of Oscar de la Renta" designed by the fashion impresario (Summers, 1997, pp. 122–125). After 1989, a series of food manufacturers sealed agreements with Mattel to market Barbies which would carry their company trademark on boxes, clothing, and accessories, including Ralston cereals (1989), Kraft (1992), and Kool-Aid (1992) (Augustyniak, 1995) (Fig. 11). Other uniquely dressed and branded barbies soon followed, including the 1989 "Pepsi Spirit Barbie," F.A.O. Schwartz dolls (yearly since 1989), "U.N.I.C.E.F. Barbie" (1989), "Benetton Barbie" (1991), Wal-Mart (since 1987), J. C. Penney (since 1990), and "Bloomingdale's Donna Karan" (1994, 1996), among many others (Summers, 1997, p. 98; Westenhouser, 1994, pp. 146–147, 166). "All American Barbie" (1990) came with a pair of Reebok athletic shoes (Summers, 1997, p. 13). Today the Barbie universe includes a vast range of endorsed commodity accessories as well, ranging from Mastercard to Crest (Fig. 12).

Barbie has retained some nonconventional career options since the early 1980s, but even they are somewhat domesticated. For instance, Barbie again took to space as an astronaut in 1985 (after NASA had finally included a female astronaut in 1983), but the 1985 Barbie astronaut was a fashion-conscious space traveler (Summers, 1997, p. 15). A line of "Astro Fashions" was marketed to clothe these chic astronauts, including outfits like "Dazzling Dancer" and "Galaxy A Go Go," which suggested that astronaut Barbie was more invested in style than exploration and research (Summers, 1997, pp. 111–112). "Astro Fashions'" designer Carol Spencer enthused that "I thought Barbie would dress if she were on the moon" (Lord, 1994, p. 119) (Fig. 13). The 1993 "Police Officer Barbie" placed Barbie in a position of genuine authority, but the box displayed officer Barbie in a "glittering evening dress" which emphasized that Barbie never could be stripped of glamour (Rana, 1996, pp. 50–51).

By 1983 the aerobics movement compelled Mattel to concede that many women of flesh engaged in more intensive exercise than their plastic archetype. In the 1970s Barbie engaged in various recreational leisures with modest physical exertion, primarily beach play and camping. An exception was the 1970–1971 "Shape-Ups" set, a red leotard and tights outfit with hand weights, a twist exerciser, and an exercise booklet written by the new realistically articulated "Living Barbie" doll (Eames, 1997, p. 112), but most Barbie exercise was quite restrained. Mattel transparently feigns ignorance of Barbie's body, commonly explaining that Barbie's prodigious breasts and tiny waist are functionally necessary to hold clothing on the doll or that she simply has nothing to do with sexuality. When Mattel apparently recognized the significance of the aerobics movement, Barbie was enlisted, but her focus tended to be on workout style, not physical transformations or the workout process itself. The 1983 "Great Shape Barbie," for instance, came outfitted in snappy leotards and leg warmers and (in some packages) a Walkman personal stereo (Summers, 1997, pp. 36–37). The 1989 "Barbie and the All Stars"

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Fig. 11. One of many brand tie-ins from the 1990s, Kool-Aid Wacky Warehouse Barbie III (1996).

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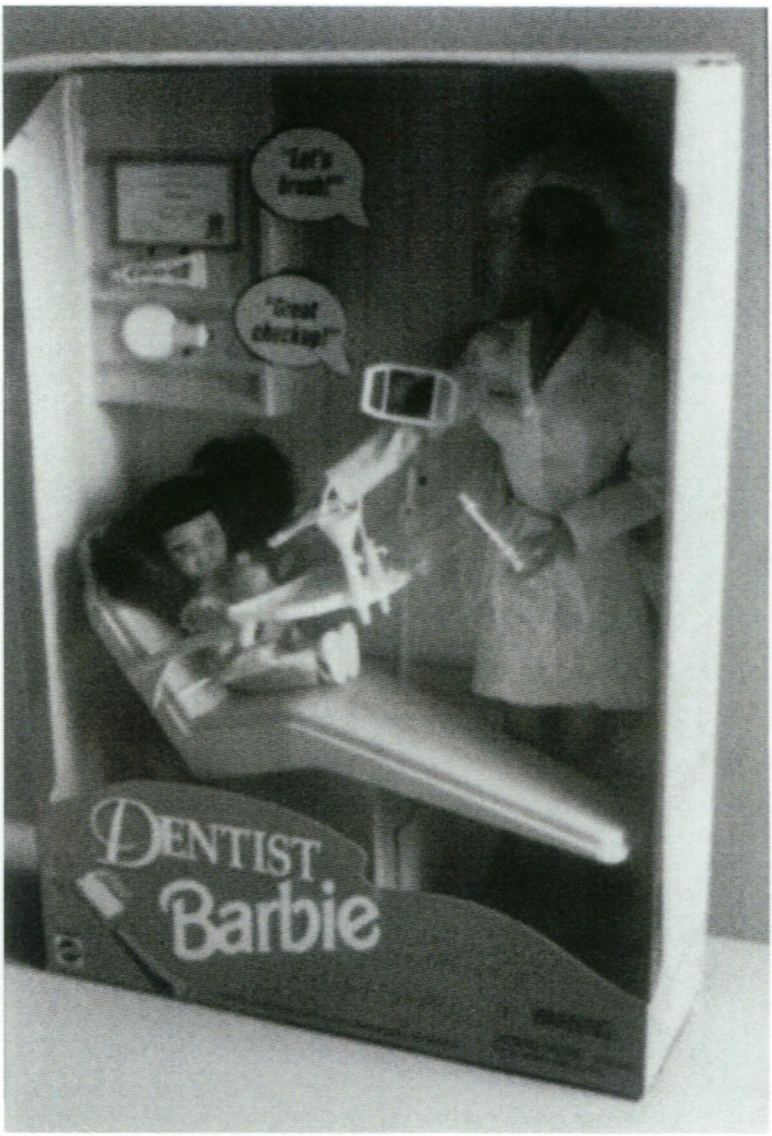

Fig. 12. Dentist Barbie (1997) comes with a tiny tube of Crest toothpaste.

doll included an exercise outfit and leggings as well as a gym bag (Summers, 1997, p. 13). The "Barbie and the All Stars" box indicated that the doll embodied the conversion from "aerobics star to party superstar," focusing on the product of workouts (i.e., undefined social benefits), rather than working out. Barbie's

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Fig. 13. Intergalactic glamour: Astronaut Barbie (1985).

workout discipline in the 1980s was potentially under threat from a few contradictory accessories, such as the "Barbie Loves McDonald's," "Barbie Soda Shoppe," and "Barbie Ice Cream Shoppe" playsets (Summers, 1997, pp. 158–159, 162). The "threat" from such accessories was only symbolic, though, since Barbie's plastic body demanded no exercise discipline. Generally, Barbie's physical fitness came through low-impact social exercise, such as "Tennis Barbie" (1986), "Tennis Stars Barbie and Ken" (1986), and "Roller Skating Barbie" (1980) (Summers, 1997, pp. 83, 95, 108).

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BARBIE AS A DISTORTED REFLECTION

It is often argued that Barbie is simply a reflection of her times, a mirror of fashion, women's roles, body image, and material consumption. Barbie material culture certainly does not ignore dominant social currents, but Barbie's "reflections" represent only select possibilities at various historical moments. What Barbie reflects is a complicated tangle of dominant ideologies and resistant symbolism: if Barbie is a mirror of society, it is at best a distorted and prepossessed reflection.

Well before 1963, when Betty Friedan (1983) defined "the problem that has no name," a significant number of women were defying the Feminine Mystique and forging a place for themselves in the male-dominated workforce. Barbie was created in the image of these women, the Charlotte Johnsons and Ruth Handlers of the world, whose aspirations and agency basically went unspoken. Consequently, the doll had potentially revolutionary implications from the outset by even tacitly acknowledging women's agency and power in a wide range of settings.

According to Mattel, Barbie's persona and age deliberately were left vague so that children could play with her according to their own imaginations, rather than a preset Barbie personality. To facilitate flexible play, Mattel marketed a varied wardrobe appropriate to settings ranging from very casual to very elegant. But Barbie never was designed to be a cipher that could accommodate a vast range of social possibilities or experiences. Barbie was a structured representation, a career woman whose every box proclaimed her status as "Teen-age Fashion Model" and implicitly bespoke her class standing. Her sophisticated, high-fashion outfits were things Barbie modeled as part of her job and not "real life," but there were no "Factory Shift" ensembles suggesting a lower-class lifestyle, and the college-educated Barbie spent her vacation time at resorts and on cruises. Consumers who wished to defy such symbolism could make their own Barbie clothing, limited only by their imagination and sewing skills, or they could purchase patterns (Caviale, 1997; Cross, 1996). Patterns certainly were less costly than the prefabricated fashions: in 1962, for instance, Mattel-licensed patterns retailed in the Ward's catalog for 98¢ for a package of 12 (*Barbie Bazaar*, 1994, p. 68). This contrasted with the price of premade fashions, which ranged from $1.29 to $2.64 each in the same catalog (*Barbie Bazaar*, 1994, p. 69). These licensed patterns, though, represented the same activities as the fashion ensembles. Certainly an imaginative child could place a well-dressed Barbie in virtually any sort of play situation, and an enterprising parental seamstress could produce outfits that encouraged nontraditional roles, but neither the patterns nor the fashions stimulated such resistance.

Barbie's early career options reflected historicized gender expectations, because most of her activities were coded as female occupations about which a young girl might dream (e.g., model, registered nurse, ballerina, stewardess, nightclub singer). Yet, while in explicitly gendered female careers, Barbie was nonetheless working at a time when few American women were employed outside the home.

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Initially, a few outfits suggested domestic activity (cooking and sewing), but they were ambiguously presented. Presumably, Barbie did not do rough housework because, like Ruth Handler, she could pay someone to do it for her.

Barbie explicitly and unambiguously began doing housework in the mid-1960s. The introduction of "heavy" housework (e.g., ironing, sweeping) did coincide with expanding career options, such as astronaut. The housework:career dichotomy may simply represent conflicting visions of Barbie's image within Mattel: within a company the size of Mattel, it is reasonable that even a well-integrated team of designers and marketers could disagree on or not fully comprehend the symbolism of their product. Mid-1960s Barbie material culture may reflect Mattel's conscious crafting of a deliberately wide range of possibilities for Barbie; this notion is in keeping with Mattel's own claims for Barbie's plasticity, arguing that various forms of wage labor and household domestic work alike are reasonable options within the range of possibilities available to women. On the other hand, there may well have been a deliberate attempt to position Barbie in domestic ideology's most conservative connotations, a reactionary effort which was partially masked by conceding other, mostly unattainable career choices, such as astronaut and ballerina. In either instance, the domestication of Barbie likely more or less accurately reflected a society which was divided with regard to women's roles. During this period of Barbie's history, there clearly was considerable debate over shifting social and labor roles of women, and Barbie can only be expected to reflect that discord.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to argue that Barbie's domestication happened by accident in either the 1960s or the 1980s. From its inception, Mattel used sophisticated marketing research and pioneering sales approaches continually to expand their toy empire. Their sponsorship of "The Mickey Mouse Club," for instance, almost single-handedly made toy-buying a year-round enterprise, instead of a seasonal activity centered around Christmas (Lord, 1994, p. 21). Mattel employed television to market toys directly to children, and they used path-breaking research techniques to divine what parents would allow their children to consume. Consequently, it does not seem likely that Mattel changed Handler's "no rough housework" dictum without having a good sense of whom they were selling domesticity to and why.

Barbie works today at a variety of jobs, many still stereotypical "female" occupations (e.g., ballerina, teacher). Even in her less traditional careers, Barbie is protective (police officer, fire fighter) or nurturing ("Doctor Barbie," for example, comes with babies and a list of child care rules, and "Veterinarian Barbie" includes cuddly puppies and kittens). In 1991, in the midst of the Persian Gulf War, "Stars 'N Stripes Marine Corps Barbie" appeared in a dress blues uniform with a Desert Storm medal, but she was not issued a gun (Summer, 1997, p. 87). Like most other Barbies, the Desert Storm-themed Barbie was a fashion statement, focusing on the stylishness of military clothing and evading the social and political complications of warfare. Today, in addition to unarmed combat, Barbie is also responsible for

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childcare, cleaning, shopping, cooking, baking, pet care, and laundry in a domestic sphere which appears to have no limits.

Barbie is not simply a symbolic "ideal" to which her young consumers can aspire, nor is she merely ideological artifice masking objective social inequality or an essential femininity. Barbie instead "imitates" a seemingly comprehensive constellation of "feminine" attributes, social roles, life experiences, structural inequalities, and unspoken aspirations which never existed in the first place (cf. Baudrillard, 1983). Mattel aspires to present Barbie as an "authentic" archetype of femininity, but the company's inability to anchor the doll's domestic symbolism over four decades reflects that there is no essential domesticity (if not femininity) to identify.

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