

WHAT IF?: GENDER AND THE STEM PIPELINE

Leading Question

How would the world be different if women had been equally involved in tech innovations for the last thirty years?

Watch the video

<https://youtu.be/c-vG-X4HL2A>

Talking about “what-ifs” might seem like a pointless exercise. But exploring a different past can be an illuminating way to imagine a different, and often better, future. And imagining a better future is the first step toward creating one.

1. Why do you think women went into computer science in the 1980s? Why do you think women fell out of the computer science education pipeline in the 1990s?
2. Do you agree with Susan Wojcicki that digital literacy is a critical skill for children today? Why or why not?
3. What kinds of products or services do you think would be available today if more women had been involved in leadership roles in tech companies over the past thirty years?
4. How do you think the work culture of Silicon Valley or other tech hubs would be different if more women had been involved over the past thirty years?
5. What is the situation for women in STEM careers today? Is it better or worse than in the 1990s? What has changed? What has not changed?
6. Some have argued that Silicon Valley tech startups exhibit a “bro culture” that is hostile to women and other groups but comfortable for certain young men. Is this culture effective or necessary to create new innovations in today’s world? Why or why not?
7. Are you involved in tech? If so, how did you become interested in it and what has your experience been like? If you have never been involved, did you ever consider it? Why or why not?

START SOMETHING

What kind of “culture” do you create around yourself at work and at home? How can you ensure that it is inclusive?

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BIOGRAPHIES

Helen Bradley

Helen Bradley was the Senior VP of Software Systems at Sun from 1990-1994 and then the Senior VP of Engineering at NetApp from 1995 to 1999. When NetApp went public in 1995, it was made up of 100 people and has since grown to over 10,000 employees. Bradley was essential in building the engineering team at a time when the company was doubling in size every year. Bradley earned a bachelor’s degree in math from MIT and a master’s in Computer Science from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Susan Wojcicki

Susan Wojcicki, Google employee number 16 and the only woman CEO under the Alphabet umbrella, is the head of YouTube, the world’s most popular digital video platform. Instrumental in Google’s 2006 acquisition of YouTube, Wojcicki oversees content and business operations, engineering, and product development. She has a BA from Harvard; a Master’s from the University of California, Santa Cruz; and an MBA from the UCLA Anderson School of Management.

RESOURCES

Watch all nine videos of Women’s Work: Perspectives on Gender in Tech
<http://bit.ly/2Fh2l6p>

Oral history interview of Helen Bradley
<http://bit.ly/2t3E1Ql>

Thinking Big with YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki
<https://youtu.be/FGExa9BCqkQ>

Women in S&E Occupations, 1993-2015
<http://bit.ly/2t9SQRY>

Earned bachelor’s degrees, by sex and field: 2000–15
<http://bit.ly/2F3lbP8>

Science & Engineering Degrees, 1966-2012
<http://bit.ly/2CSZX0f>

About

This discussion guide is part of the series Women’s Work: Perspectives on Gender in Tech, nine videos produced by the Exponential Center at the Computer History Museum. The center is dedicated to capturing the legacy and advancing the future of entrepreneurship and innovation in Silicon Valley and around the world.

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