Chapter 81
East Meets West:
A Comparison of Religion, Women, and Technology

Marianne Robin Russo
Florida Atlantic University, USA

ABSTRACT

It would seem that people are very different because they may dress differently, are acculturated in different manners, speak different languages, have different cuisine, family traditions, etiquette, philosophies, literature, history, governments, education, artifacts, and technologies. The concept of Eastern culture and Western culture is often couched as dichotomous. Eastern and Western cultures are not monolithic and have wide variance, inclusive of variance that might be found in religions. Religion plays a role in both cultures, and these religions have an impact on how women may be viewed and treated, inclusive of gender expectations. These gender expectations that may stem from religions may then affect how women are immersed in science and technological fields. This chapter briefly explores gender as it is encapsulated in the East and West within the frame of religion. Three religions are briefly discussed, one that is considered more of an Eastern religion and two that are Westernized, Islam and Southern Baptist and Mormonism, respectively. After these religions are examined in terms of gender, these four questions are answered: (a) Could religion hold back women in technology positions that are within the male domain of work? (b) Are religions different in how they compartmentalize women? (c) Are Eastern and Western religions different in how women are perceived and ultimately treated? and (d) How can women overcome the stereotypic threat within the world of religion and work?

INTRODUCTION

The world seems to be a mosaic of people and the culture, language, and social nexus that is associated with all. It would seem that people are very different because they may dress differently, are acculturated in a different manners, speak different languages, have different foods, dance, family traditions, etiquette, philosophies, literature, history governments, education, artifacts, and technologies. When people do not travel and experience others, they may look to superficial

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or outward differences to construct perceptions about others. However, are people around the globe really that different?

For example, the concept of Eastern culture and western culture is often couched as dichotomous. Western culture seems to be steeped in an association with Europe, and can include the regions of Europe, the Americas, and Australia. Eastern cultures cover a wide swath of histories, cultures, and geography and are not limited to East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. Characterizing Eastern and Western cultures are quite different because we assume antithetical ideology and both and these semantic terms are tossed about with no real care for what they may truly mean. For example, Western culture can conjure the ideas of capitalism, individuality, and freedom, while people in Eastern cultures can be portrayed as more stifled and controlled. There may be geographic or variations on the theme inclusive of life, but It may be that people around the globe are not that much different from each other.

Eastern and Western cultures are not monolithic and have wide variance, inclusive of variance that might be found in religions. Religion plays a role in both cultures, and these religions have an impact on how women may be viewed and treated, inclusive of gender expectations. These gender expectations that may stem from religions may then affect how women are immersed in science and technological fields. In essence these gender roles and expectations may impact women in technology. Inasmuch as there may look like there is a difference in culture or religion between the constructs of East and West, the impact on a women who pursues a technology career may still experience many of the same perceptions, with differences in treatment being moot.

This chapter will briefly explore gender as it is encapsulated in the East and West within the frame of religion. Three religions are briefly discussed as follows: one of an Eastern religion and two that are westernized, Islam and Southern Baptist and Mormonism, respectively. After these religions are examined in terms of gender, these four questions will try to be answered:

1. Could religion hold back women in technology positions that are within the male domain of work?
2. Are religions different in how they compartmentalize women?
3. Are eastern and western religions different in how women are perceived, and ultimately treated?
4. How can women overcome the stereotypic threat within the world of religion and work?

This chapter will continue with the assumption that there is a connection between religion, women, and technology. The three religions of Islam, Southern Baptist, and Mormonism were purposively selected for this study based on the geographic locations of east and west. Islam is one of the largest religions of eastern cultures, while Southern Baptists are also a large religion within the U.S. western culture. Both Southern Baptists can be found in the southern United States and Mormonism is well established in the western area of the United States, making the latter a viable analysis. For these reasons, these three religions were selected for analysis.

RELIGION

Eastern Culture and the Religion of Islam

Since Islam began in the East and because "Islam is the second largest religion in the world behind Christianity, with over 1 billion members and are mostly concentrated around the Middle East area, although it is found worldwide" (Just, 2012), Islam will be considered to be an Eastern construct. In this case, it will be found useful to think of Islam as an "umbrella identity," an idiom of cultural unity