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**Why More Women Should Consider a Career in Computer Programming**

**By V. Berba Velasco Jr., Ph.D.**

**Why More Women Should Consider a Career in Computer Programming**

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Everyone knows that computer programming is a heavily male-dominated field. I think this is unfortunate. Over the years, I've come to conclude that there is a great deal that women can contribute to this field.

Why is computer programming regarded as a primarily masculine discipline? I think that in part, it's because men have a reputation for being more likely to tinker around with gadgets and gizmos. In part, it's also because computer science is supposedly a very math-oriented field, and men are supposedly more inclined toward mathematical disciplines.

(Incidentally, I know that such generalizations would offend certain people. I'd like to emphasize that this is not my intent at all, nor do I wish to make excessively broad generalizations about either gender. However, a multitude of psychological studies do claim that men have—on the average—a greater aptitude for mathematics and mechanics than women do, whereas women tend to perform better at linguistics and communication. These tendencies coincide well with my own observations, so for now, I'll assume that these studies are reasonable descriptions of gender differences.)

Anyway, people often claim that men make better programmers because they are more mathematically inclined. Personally, I disagree. It is true that computer science is very much mathematical in nature; however, computer programming often is not. It's true that a software developer should understand basic concepts such as binary computations, round-off error and Boolean logic; however, for most programming tasks, there is little need for calculus, group theory or other advanced mathematical topics. For this reason, I think that the importance of a strong mathematical aptitude is largely overblown.

Indeed, I think that linguistic skill is decidedly more important. I'd say that in years past, about 90% of the programmers that I encountered produced sloppy code—software that is clumsily structured, poorly documented and difficult to understand. I've also noticed a strong correlation between linguistic skill

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and the ability to generate clean, legible code. And why not? Computer languages are, after all, just that—languages. It's thus reasonable to expect that someone with a strong language aptitude will—on the average—produce cleaner, more understandable code than someone whose language skills are lackluster.

That is one reason why I wish more women would pursue a programming career. If it is indeed true that women have better language skills, then they are likely to perform well with computer languages as well. Again, this jibes well with my own experiences. I haven't known many female programmers, but most of the ones that I do know have produced some rather outstanding work. (To be fair, I've also known some lousy female programmers; however, these individuals had little passion for their field, and only entered it for the sake of a paycheck. That's a pretty good recipe for mediocrity, regardless of one's gender.)

Breaking into this field may not be easy. I'm sure that many women will have to combat the prejudiced

notion that software development is a man's field, and that female programmers are mere dilettantes. Still, it is my earnest hope that more women will make their marks in this arena. If they have the right passion for this field, and if they understand their strengths, then I believe that they have much to offer.

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serve in a team where the importance of clean, high-quality programming is understood by all.

### **Don't Let Negative Programming Create Your Reality**

**By Anita Foley**

#### **Don't Let Negative Programming Create Your Reality by Anita Foley**

What have you been programmed to believe? Throughout your life, you have been programmed by your parents, your friends, your siblings, and yourself. Programming occurs as a result of repeated actions or messages. This programming creates your beliefs, your beliefs guide your actions, and your actions create your reality.

Positive programming results in optimistic beliefs and gratifying realities. For instance, if you were programmed, when you were six years old, to think the tooth fairy would give you a quarter for your tooth, you probably believed it. The result of this belief was most likely a gratifying experience. You were programmed by your parents, friends, or siblings to think there was a tooth

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fairly and you believed it. This belief guided your actions and you put your tooth under the pillow. This action created the gratifying reality, (i.e., you got your quarter!)

Unfortunately, not all programming results in beliefs as benevolent as the tooth fairy. Negative programming results in detrimental beliefs and disappointing realities. If you were programmed by your parents, friends, or siblings to think it is too risky to start your own business, you probably believe it. This belief guides your actions and you stay at your job. This action creates your disappointing reality, (i.e., you get a limited paycheck and give half of it to Uncle Sam.)

You've probably received a lot more negative programming than positive in your lifetime. You may have been told you weren't very good at something, or you'd never make a living if you chose a certain career path, or you'd never get a good job if you didn't go to college, or you'd poke your eye out if you ran with a stick. In addition, as if all that wasn't enough, you managed to impose your own self-limiting beliefs as well. You may have taken on the belief that you're too fat, too tall, too dumb, too skinny, too uneducated, or too lazy to pursue and accomplish your dreams.

Beliefs are such an important factor of success that you must learn to get rid of the negative, self-limiting ones and create positive, self-enabling beliefs. If programming creates your beliefs, and your beliefs guide your actions, and your actions create your reality, wouldn't it make sense to get rid of the negative programming?

So, what have you been programmed to believe? If you are letting negative programming create your reality, you must learn to rewrite the program!

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