

Not All Smart Girls Need to Go to College

A recent *Forbes* [article](#) left readers with a statistic that is downright scary: Two-thirds of the American student debt is held by women.

This is perhaps not surprising since [more women than men](#) now go to college.

But there's a more alarming reason at play. Compared to men, women are less likely to understand the lending process, including the hole they are about to dig for themselves. They see others going to college, and it appears many [simply assume](#) that taking out loans is what everyone does and that it is no sweat to pay them back.

I recently heard from one mother that such a case was similar to that experienced by her daughter. A diligent worker, this particular young lady kept her nose to the grindstone, pushing herself to the limit to earn two degrees. She eventually landed a great job, but that job is now wearing her out. If it weren't for the debt she accumulated, she would happily adopt a less strenuous work schedule and focus on other aspects of life.

The mother continued her story by saying, "The problem is, everyone tells girls, 'Oh, you're so smart, you need to go to college!'" She went on to note that girls believe this, never stopping to consider the implications debt and time will have on their future.

I was reminded of this story when I came across a piece by Penelope Trunk, author, mother, and founder of four startups. Early in February, Ms. Trunk wrote a piece entitled, "[Misogynist conversations women have all the time.](#)" To my surprise one of these so-called conversations sounds a lot

like the slogan repeated to my friend's daughter: **"You're so smart, you can do anything!"** Trunk explains:

"We say this to girls. All the time. The smart girls who follow all the rules at school outperform the boys on everything school-related except football. We tell these girls they will go to a great college and doors will open up and they will 'do great things' the world.

And some do great things in the world. Until age 30. Then most women choose to give more time to family than their career. Women don't want to be the breadwinner. And women don't want to work the ten-hour days that are required of people who have outstanding careers. Because they won't see their kids."

Trunk goes on to imply that it's all well and good to praise a girl for being a success in school, but when we do so, we should also consider the message it sends to her. This message is that school is important, but family is not. In this way, the feminism which was supposed to lift women out of degradation becomes the very medium by which further degradation and dissatisfaction comes.

Trunk concludes by saying, "Parents should validate [the homemaking] option as much as they validate the option of being president or running a science lab."

Is she right? Has society been so eager to ensure that women have happy, successful lives that they have shoehorned them into positions that many women really don't enjoy? And if so, how can parents reverse course and give wise, practical direction that takes into account both their daughters' talents and the instinctual desires toward home and family which reside in their hearts?