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As I close the newspaper this morning, I am reeling. The president of Harvard was apologizing for making a speech that suggested innate differences might make women less capable of succeeding at math and science than men. He argued that women might be less inclined to advance to top levels in science because they are unwilling to work long, grueling hours once they have children. This statement comes in today's supposedly enlightened times from one of the top academic leaders.

I start to ponder whether I have an innate difference that makes me less capable of science than men. I feel like I work long, grueling hours, but it is true that many of them are not filled with the joys and travails of raising two young girls. And, I start to think about how to raise my girls in such a way that will counteract the stereotypes that will surely follow them. You see, I am the daughter of immigrants. My parents came here from Denmark before I was born. When I look at the pool of women colleagues in oceanography, there is a disproportionate number of us—foreign born or born of immigrants to the United States. I had the pleasure of attending Complex Systems Summer School in Santa Fe several years ago. Approximately 10 of the 80 attendees were women and of those, only two of us were born in the United States. And, both of us had parents who immigrated to the United States. Maybe it isn't so much a lack of innate math and science skills, but the "American" societal pressures that somehow prevent women from achieving in those fields.

Here are some facts about me. For the past year and a half, I have been an Assistant Professor in Residence at the University of Connecticut. The "in Residence" part means that I am not tenure track and bring in my own salary with grants (i.e., "soft money"). The "Professor" part means that I can advise and mentor graduate students, teach, and participate in faculty meetings. I am an interdisciplinary oceanographer who uses optics and remote sensing to address biological and physical processes in the oceans. I work on a variety of ecosystems from tropical seagrasses to glacial meltwater. Some advantages of my field are that I collaborate with a wide variety of scientists and have useful skills that make it easier for me to be a soft money scientist. The biggest disadvantage is that I don't fit easily into a

box. I'm not a classic "physical" oceanographer modeling currents or a typical "biological" oceanographer.

I left my postdoctoral position at the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute one year early and moved out to Rhode Island when my husband started a tenure track position. Although we moved for his position, I feel like he envies the freedom that I have from administrative burdens, not to mention the ocean view from my office. However, I know how hard it is to make a lifetime of soft money and I don't like being a statistic. In my department and at many other marine departments, women comprise a much larger share of the soft money faculty than the tenure track faculty. Moreover, most of my female colleagues from graduate school have opted out of the academic world. The long hours, stress, and lack of financial reward make academia challenging even without the additional pressures of raising a family. Now, I feel like I can't give up. I want to be an example for other female scientists and my daughters, in particular. I want to show them that they can have both a rewarding career and a family. I don't doubt that women may be innately different from men, but perhaps this gives us unique insights into science and the natural world. As a society, we need to look towards building a culture of women who are strong, confident and able to tackle the problems that the future holds.

