

EDITOR'S CORNER

Love, Marriage, and Professional Development

Jennifer, the able editor at Food & Nutrition Press, was recently married. I sent her some flowers representing all the readers of this Journal to wish her and Matt a wonderful life together. Jennifer will be leaving FNP and will work near her new domicile. That is great. That also prompted me to think about the trend of modern society on balancing love, marriage, and professional development.

In the “good old days” when I was growing up in China many, many moons ago there was not much question about the scenario that “boy loves girl, boy marries girl, boy makes a living to support girl and babies, and everybody lives happily ever after.” Things have changed drastically in the past 30 years especially in the West and USA. When I first attended American Society of Microbiology (ASM) and Institute for Food Technologists (IFT) meetings in the 1960’s hardly any females presented research papers or chaired a scientific session. Nowadays about half of the attendees of national meetings are females and they take leadership roles in professional organizations as well. ASM has had a string of five to six female presidents in the past decade and IFT is going to have a second female president in the last four years. The trend is certainly good and brings equality to both sexes in the workplace.

I may be wrong, but my observations somehow make me think that females are making more sacrifices than males where job locations are concerned, especially when both parties have Ph.D. degrees. The ideal situation is that both lovebirds secure equally well-paid jobs in the same location. Such is not always the case.

The stories of the following Ph.D. couples provides some insight into what I have experienced in my long years of working with students and colleagues.

Couple #1. Husband and wife are both brilliant microbiologists. Husband found a tenured track faculty position and moved steadily up the professorial ranking at the university. Wife, fortunately, found a job at the same place but is not in a tenure track position and will not move any higher in the position. She could have gone somewhere else for a better job but did not. That is a sacrifice.

Couple #2. Husband and wife are both brilliant food scientists. Wife found a fantastic job in a big city. Husband followed but could not find a suitable job. After a year or two the husband became restless and found a job in a small town a couple of thousand miles away and left the wife and daughter in the big city. After a few years and tens of thousands of frequent flyer mileage points the wife decided to quit the wonderful, secure job to move to the small town to join husband. The wife quitting that excellent corporate level job still seems to me a sacrifice.

Couple #3 Husband is an ambitious computer chip whiz and wife is an outstanding and charming microbiologist. Husband found a great job in the East

and wife found an equally great job in the Midwest and the two commuted by air. After a couple of years, and in the interest of love and family relations, wife gave up her job and moved East. She could not find a job in the East for a couple of years. The nice husband moved the couple to the West Coast hoping that the wife can find a job. At this moment the wife is still unemployed and starting to feel rusty in her profession and worries that she will never find a good job. I just saw them in California. She lamented "What I did for love!!--giving up all my potential and now I am struggling to find a job when I had one of the best jobs in the field a couple of years ago."

The theme of these stories is that these couples maintained their love and marriage in spite of sacrifices in professional developments. I have seen many couples and lovers part company because of job locations and availability. I am sure there are many great husbands and guys who gave up a lot for their wives and lovers in professional developments but on balance I feel females are the ones taking more of the sacrifices in this area.

My Ph.D. son and his Ph.D.-to-be wife are starting a family and I pray that they both will have good jobs in the same city and live happily ever after. As for me, I have a great deal!! My Ph.D. wife is free as a lark flying all over the place. We have a wonderful "Airport Romance" because we see each other a lot in airports around the world.

I wish all my dear readers who choose love and marriage have great professional development along with their great partners in the same place.

Best wishes to Jennifer and Matt in their new adventures in life.

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Editor