

A Family Affair: Couple combine PhDs and parenting

Moti and Noga Friedman discuss the joys and difficulties of child-bearing whilst pursuing academic success

When Noga Friedman enrolled to take a Master's degree in Forensic and Legal Psychology at the University of Leicester in 1997, she had little idea that she and her husband were embarking on a combination of academic study and child-rearing that would have daunted most couples.

However, the Friedmans remained undaunted and eight years later Noga not only has her Master's degree, but she and her husband, Moti, both have a PhD from Leicester plus four children, the eldest of whom accompanied Noga at the start of her academic programme at Leicester. Noga is currently expecting their fifth child.

Noga commented:

"I had enrolled at the University of Leicester two years before Moti, and during his first Leicester summer school in 1999 I was just finishing my MSc. My supervisor was then Professor Miller from the Psychology Department and when our first child, Shlomo, was eight months old I went along to my supervisor with him, and one of the secretaries took care of Shlomo during the supervision."

Since they were studying part-time, when they came to Leicester they stayed in student accommodation and Moti suggested that Noga might prefer to go with him to one of his lectures, rather than stay in their room.

With the permission of his tutor, Dr Marianne Coleman, Director of Distance Learning at the School of Education, Noga became a guest at one of her lectures and found the experience so enjoyable that she enrolled on a PhD programme of her own in the same School.

On and off the family from Israel, who eventually numbered six, were in Leicester for six and a half years, attending summer and winter schools and tutorial meetings with their supervisors, Dr Mark Lofthouse and Professor Peter Ribbins.

Commenting on the difficulties of both parents studying for a doctorate with a young family, Moti paid tribute to another hero of the family.

"Studying was difficult, but we had support from each other as well as from Noga's mother, Mrs Esther Redler, who came with us to almost all the summer and winter schools, taking care of our babies. We could never have completed the PhDs without her. In addition, Noga had to run to the dormitories and breast-feed during the breaks in the summer school. It was just a crazy period."

The Friedmans turned to the University of Leicester for a UK degree that would develop both their academic skills and their written English and would give them the enriching experience of periods of study in another country.

It turned out to be a happy time for them. Noga said:

"This was not our first visit to the UK, but it was our first visit to Leicester. We felt right at home, especially with all the help we got from everyone at the University, which included even a baby's cot in the dormitories. We enjoyed the city very much, including festivals and events in Victoria Park, New Walk and the Space Centre."

Moti added:

"It was very challenging to write a doctoral thesis at a high-level university such as Leicester. My mother tongue is American English and I learned that UK English is indeed a different language. I joke that I speak as an American but write as an Englishman. Noga's mother tongue is Hebrew, so it was a challenge for her to write and do a viva examination in English."

There is no sign that Noga and Moti's enthusiasm for hard work is flagging. They continue to run their market research company, BrightNet – the Institute of Business Research Ltd (www.brightnet.biz), a business that Moti began in 1994, and which now numbers major international companies among its clients. Moti currently also lectures at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Noga, too, lectures in the fields of Marketing, Psychology and Fine Arts in organisations that range from non-profit-making to industry and academic institutions.

Noga's doctorate was on integrated marketing as a means of achieving responsiveness in an institution of higher education, while Moti's was on the effects of communications technology on organisational communication in an institution of higher education.

They feel that their Leicester PhDs have enhanced the expertise they can give to their company. Noga said:

"Today we feel that our level as researchers and lecturers has gone up considerably due to our studies. We would like to add that our supervisors were on the highest level possible. Moti finished his viva during December 2004 with minor amendments, which were accepted during January 2005. I finished my viva during October 2005 with no amendments. This could never have been achieved without our supervisors."

Noga and Moti Friedman have four children: Shlomo (7), Tehila (5½), Nathaniel (3½), Inbar (1½). Their acknowledgements of thanks are not only to their academic supervisors, but to their family and to each other for the mutual support and help they provided.

Note to editors: Further information is available from Drs Noga and Moti Friedman, email brightn@zahav.net.il, tel +972-3-6191383 (at BrightNet).