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My research is focused on increasing our understanding of ecophysiological responses of marine microplankton to natural physico-chemical forcing. Currently, I am investigating harmful algal blooms, a worldwide problem, with the aim of providing clues for their management.

I had always wanted to study and protect nature, enjoyed terrestrial botany during my undergraduate studies at the University of Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain), then moved to the marine world for graduate work. In 1987, I started my PhD thesis under the supervision of Marta Estrada at the Institut de Ciències del Mar (CSIC, Barcelona). She offered me a challenging topic: to understand the underlying mechanisms of the sensitivity of dinoflagellates to small-scale turbulence. With Marta, I had the great opportunity to interact with the much-loved ecologist Ramon Margalef.

I like working in open-minded teams, collaborating, integrating different skills and disciplines. Marine research, multidisciplinary by definition, makes me happy. My greatest reward has been serving the international scientific community through UNESCO's GEOHAB (Global Ecology and Oceanography of Harmful Algal Blooms) program, including serving as a member and as vice chair of its Scientific Steering Committee (2009 to 2014).

When I started my PhD studies at the ICM, research had very limited funding and its old building was inappropriate for meeting the new challenges of marine research. Nevertheless, it was a good time for a country that had only recently opened up to democracy and the European Union. The funds available for science and education were invested in enthusiastic young students and mentors who worked hard to foster and internationalize science in Spain and Catalonia. Today, a global economic, ecologic, and ethical crisis threatens humanity and science. Science, itself, is affected by increasing emphasis on competitiveness and decreasing collaboration—one of the original cornerstones of scientific research. Having a permanent position and management responsibilities in my research center, I feel a special commitment to work for a better future. It's not an easy task.

I am passionate about my work, my whole family, and classical music. The dual priorities of my children's education and my career have oscillated throughout my life. It has



Elisa with her husband, Rafael, and their two children, Joaquim and Judit, in Alfacs Bay (Ebre Delta, Northwest Mediterranean).

been a team task, undertaken with my always-supportive and generous husband, a general practitioner and epidemiologist who sees the world through “women’s eyes.”

My career began and has developed during a golden age for science that facilitated women’s involvement in research. Unfortunately, in recent years I’ve noticed that the choice of motherhood pushes more women out of science following completion of their PhDs.

I am concerned about the future of science, as it may be indicative of the future of humanity. We need excellence in science, of course we do. However, to me, the competitiveness that pervades it is not good for anybody, neither men nor women. In times of crisis, women tend to be more affected than men, mainly because of biological reasons. Therefore, we might see a decrease in their numbers in the coming years. With a generous spirit and a positive vision, we can work collaboratively for the benefit of science and humanity as a whole.