

LIVING WHAT THEY STUDY: FELLOWS JUGGLE WORK, FAMILY

Jason DeCaro often feels guilty when he drops his infant daughter off at her caregiver's house, but it is not because of separation anxiety or concern for her welfare. He is torn because his in-laws take care of her, and at times it seems like a favor that he and his wife never can repay.



Erin and Jason DeCaro, a MARIAL graduate fellow, with daughter, Alexa.

"They offered to do it, and yet it is an awfully big favor," said DeCaro, a graduate fellow at the MARIAL Center whose in-laws moved from New York to Atlanta so they could help take care of their granddaughter, Alexa. "Every time I bring the baby over, every single day, I feel this little twang of 'Gosh, am I asking for too much?'"

DeCaro is one of several MARIAL faculty, fellows, and staff who juggle work and family responsibilities at the same time as they are studying them. They know firsthand the stresses and strains of being a working parent.

"It's a constant struggle," said Riché Daniel Barnes, a MARIAL graduate fellow who has three children and is working on her doctorate in anthropology. Her three-year-old daughter, Nailah, attends the private Romar Academy, and she takes her twin sons, Nikhil and Nasir—who recently celebrated their first birthday—to a babysitter in her neighborhood. Her husband, Darnel, is a high school math teacher, who is beginning work on a doctorate and runs a tutorial service as well.

Barnes jokes that she needs a wife to help take care of everything. "It's just very different when you have a wife that you can depend on to take care of the kids, and keep the house clean, and make sure you have every-

thing you need," she said. "I think it's hard for everyone."

Although DeCaro seems to have a child-care arrangement that others envy, it is not without its challenges. Take, for example, the time his in-laws left town to attend graduation ceremonies for their son, leaving DeCaro and his wife, Erin, scrambling for temporary child care. "For about a week, we were really having a hard time. We had nothing in place that we could fall back on."

Then his mother-in-law was diagnosed with cancer and had to return to New York for medical treatment. For most of the summer, DeCaro and his wife relied on help from Erin's aunt and grandmother, who also had moved from New York to Atlanta when the baby was born. Now as they await the birth of their second child, they are hopeful that Erin's mother will recover from treatment and return to Atlanta to help with child care.

Elizabeth Kurylo joined the MARIAL Center as communications director partly because it offered her a flexible, part-time work schedule that allowed her to spend more time with her daughters, who are seven and four.

"I do most of my work while my daughters are at school," said Kurylo, who was a journalist for twenty years before joining the MARIAL Center. Her husband also is a journalist. Their children went to day-care centers before they started elementary school. After their second child was born, though, Kurylo felt the strain of working two full-time jobs: one at the newspaper and one at home.

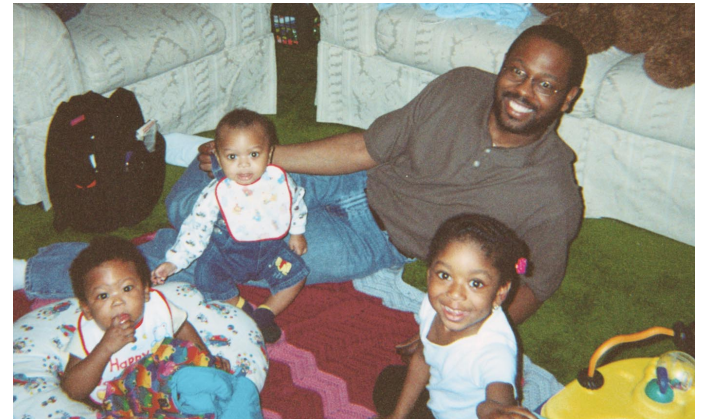
"Part of the reason I left the newspaper is that it is not a job that fits neatly into a 9:00-to-5:00 scenario. If a story broke at 5:00 p.m., it was hard to tell your editor that you could only work until 6:00 p.m. because the day-care center was about to close," Kurylo said. And with no relatives in town to watch the kids in a pinch, Kurylo and her husband had no reliable backup child-care plans. Something had to give. Her solution was to find part-time work.

MARIAL Center Director Bradd Shore and his wife, Linda, spent the first twenty-five years of their marriage doing a high-wire juggling act

with child care. As a flight attendant, Linda was away from home three to four days a week. Since her work schedule changed every month (sometimes every week), it was impossible to get reliable at-home care without hiring a full-time babysitter, which they couldn't afford. Emory had no child-care options for employees back then, so they juggled a variety of ad hoc babysitting arrangements.

"We both experienced what you might call 'serial single-parenthood,'" says Shore. "Linda would get home from a hard trip, and after a quick hello and a half hour of catch-up, I'd hand off the kids to her and disappear into my study to get the work done that I hadn't been able to do." However, Linda "never really had time to recover from her trips."

Barnes and DeCaro say that being parents helps them build rapport with the families they interview. "When you meet people and you have kids, you chat about your kids," DeCaro said, adding that he often asks very personal questions as part of his research. Because Barnes is a mother, "there's an almost instant connection" with the women she interviews. "I'm constantly dealing with the same issues that these women are dealing with," she said.



Darnel Barnes, whose wife, Riché, is a MARIAL graduate fellow, with their children.

Despite the stress of juggling work and family, DeCaro and Barnes say they wouldn't do anything differently. "There is never a good time to start a family. So one has to do what feels right," said DeCaro. "You find a way to integrate it in your life."