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## The Gift of Family

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## The Gift of Family

### Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Rachael: My father had passed away before I had been born; however, I did not only have my mother. We had extended friends and family that knew my father and helped my mom take care of me and my siblings. I never really knew what it was like to have a father, but I learned a lot from friends and relatives that had both parents. I also had my nanny; Nana, that helped my mom with the kids while she was going to school for her master's degree in counseling. Since my mom was going to school and we had our Nana helping out around the house myself and my siblings took responsibility in chores and taking care of each other when my mom was not around. Also I learned to branch out to friends when I needed help. I was playing sports at a young age and into high school and when I needed a ride to games or practice I would ask friends because my mom couldn't drive all four kids around. I think the most important thing that having a single parent taught me was to be independent as possible but to also look after my family."



*Rachael Drojak and Jacob Swarwout*

### *The Gift of Family*

*Growing up in a different family dynamic can be difficult yet rewarding. Rachael and I come from two separate family dynamics. Rachael grew up with a single parent and I have grown up with both parents. Although we come from different homes our families have helped us develop into the adults we are today.*

*Growing up with a Single Mom vs. Growing up with both parents:*

**Rachael:** My father had passed away before I had been born; however, I did not only have my mother. We had extended friends and family that knew my father and helped my mom take care of me and my siblings. I never really knew what it was like to have a father, but I learned a lot from friends and relatives that had both parents. I also had my nanny; Nana, that helped my mom with the kids while she was going to school for her master's degree in counseling. Since my mom was going to school and we had our Nana helping out around the house myself and my siblings took responsibility in chores and taking care of each other when my mom was not around. Also I learned to branch out to friends when I needed help. I was playing sports at a young age and into high school and when I needed a ride to games or practice I would ask friends because my mom couldn't drive all four kids around. I think the most important thing that having a single parent taught me was to be independent as possible but to also look after my family.

**Jacob:** Coming from a household with both parents made childhood much easier for me. However, when I was younger my father traveled for work a lot and I only saw him on the weekend or when he was on vacation. I believe that I can relate to Rachael because of this because with both parents working I relied on my older siblings and grandparents. Similar to Rachael I would often ask others for rides when I was playing sports or if I needed help. However, I had the benefit of having my father home a lot of the time and I could go to him for advice or to play outside. I could also go to my mother for advice that my father could not help me with. Rachael did not have this in her life and I really do not understand what it's like to only have one parent in my life.

*Religious Views*

**Rachael:** My mom was always religious and this was passed on to my family. We would attend church almost every Sunday and I was baptized and confirmed. However, playing sports at an early age and having other commitments limited my family's ability to attend church every Sunday. I believe that I am still religious even though I do not attend church as much as I used to. Since my father and grandfather had both passed away when I was at a young age it helps me to keep my faith strong. I want to believe that there is something more than life on Earth.

**Jacob:** Both of my parents come from a religious background and when I was younger that was reflected on my family. We would go to church every Sunday and especially on the holidays. However, as I grew older we began to stray away from going to church every Sunday when my father was working and when my siblings and I had sports. I had lost touch with my religion and really did not think about it until I came to St. John Fisher. Taking religious studies courses had sparked my curiosity in religion once again. I base my beliefs not on going to church every Sunday, but on my actions. I believe that being a good person and living life to its full potential can show your faith

just as well as going to church on Sunday. Also I like to believe that there is more to life than life on Earth even if there is not it is a beautiful thing to believe.

### *Morals and Values*

**Rachael:** Growing up in a single parent household has taught me many valuable morals and values that I follow today. I have been taught not to rely on other but trust them and be independent because that's how my mom lives. I also appreciate what I have because at young age our standard of living was much easier; however, finances became tight later on. I learned that it is not about material possessions but it is about having family and loved ones because they could gone in an instant. I have truly learned to surround myself with people who appreciate me for who I am and to be proud of whom I am because that is what my mother did when my father passed away.

**Jacob:** Both of my parents have taught me valuable morals and values that I hold on to today. They have taught me to be myself and appreciate who I am and where I come from. My parents had both been successful financially when I was younger; however, when the economy began to crumble both of my parents lost their jobs and had to find jobs where they were underpaid. From this I have learned to accept anything life may throw at me and that money cannot buy happiness. All that matters is that I have family and friends who love me for who I am and I love them equally. The biggest value that I have learned from my parents is to love others for who they are and never to judge. I am very thankful for my parents because they have helped shaped me into the person I am today.

Although Rachael and I come from different households our upbringing was very similar. Both of us have loving and supporting families that love us for whom we are and have taught us many morals and values. We both cherish our families and would not wish to change the way we had been raised. If our lives had been different we would not have grown into the people we have become.



*Ruins of an ancient temple - Naxos, Greece  
(Photo by MC)*