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Linear Version of Auto-Ethnography: Dad, The Best Guy I know

*“Where is your mom?”*

*“How do you feel when you are without your mom?”*

*“I just wish I did not have mom because she distracts me a lot.”*

Before I became ten, I thought these scenarios and questions will not come to me. I had fun time with my mom and dad, and because our family is relatively well off compared to other families I enjoyed more of opportunities than many other friends whom I know. However, the reality did not always give what I wanted throughout my childhood and whole life.

When I was ten years old, our family became totally different world. In the summer of that year, because of conflicts that our father and our mother had with their financial, emotional, and also personal problems, my parents decided to divorce and went to court battle with their inheritance. At first I did not realize the impact and the huge size of tragedy and sadness because I was really childish at that time. It was the time that I was too much naïve and could not feel the tragedy with my family, but the feeling of loneliness came very fast.

When I became 6th grader, there were numerous opportunities that I felt “I am only living with dad.” When I became upperclassman in my elementary school, there were numbers of parent-student conferences in my school. At the time of conference, there were a lot of friends that were with “both” their father and mother. However, for some times, I was the only one who only had the father as the only parent. I did not feel any loneliness and futility at the first time of conference, but I began to feel some kind of “space” in my heart. Finally, in the summer of 6th grade, I cried because I felt extreme amount of loneliness in my heart. I firstly felt so much emptiness because of absence of mom in the family, and I really blamed my dad for periods of the time when I was young. Even there was no one in my house when I came back from the school, which is unfamiliar compared to many other families. I thought that my life was heading to the end, and I couldn’t do anything without my mom. However, my dad approached as totally “different” father to me.

I always believe that my father is special and “best guy” for me. When my mother was in presence, I thought that my father was typically just a “quiet and stubborn” dad. It was the moment of divorce that my father became really different and special. After my dad and mom divorced, my father tried to spend the time with me. Not like many other fathers throughout the world, my dad always planned bi-monthly trips to southeast Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, to have enjoyable time together. I firstly did not realize that was my dad’s sign to show love for me, and I still blamed my dad for “kicking out my mom.” People can think parent’s love as necessity, and it was the time that I thought in that way as well.

On the other hand, when I began to grow up, I could feel more of my dad’s dedication and love toward me. Finally, there was one moment that I could perfectly realize my dad’s love, and it was the moment that I began to live by myself in the United States. When my father was about to leave to Korea at the first time of myself studying in the United States, my dad said to me,

“you are the best son I know, and you are the best person I know. I believe in you, and you are always in my heart. I will miss you so much.”

These small words changed whole my life. I began to love the life only with my dad, and I did not feel any loneliness as well because I can always think that my dad truly loves and cares me. Even though I sometimes resent about parent’s divorce, my father’s spending and dedicating his time with me becomes panacea for me. The first reason, my father’s genuine and unconditional love, is one of the elements that I thought I could be better off throughout my life.

However, the love is not the only reason that I really enjoyed the life only with dad. After divorce, because my father always came back early from the work and talked and spent time with me, I could listen innumerable amount of life lessons from my dad. For the first time, I thought it was the most boring moments that I had. On the other hand, I can grow up as “truthful” and “caring” man because of my dad’s lessons. My father, throughout days, always said that I have to be honest and sympathetic toward everything and everyone. Also, my father was one of the people who led me into active and smiling guy. He always buttressed me to speak up, and because of him I can get out of my shy character. His love is always unconditional, but his life lessons and support were another sources that led me into better and happier person throughout my life.

These joyous and adventurous experiences that I had with my dad were one of my best resources that I have, and this is the reason why the most important artifact that I have is small framed photo of my dad and me. There are a lot of times that I can forget my dad’s presence in my heart, and I can forget many memories and lessons that I had with my dad. And this small artifact that I have can make me to recall the time with my dad. When I see the picture with my dad, I always also imagine my dad’s smiling face and his life lessons as well. This small and banal framed photo can be sometimes nothing for some people, but, for me, it is the most important “legacy” that I have.

Throughout the essay, I mentioned that the life only with my dad was very meaningful and ultimately successful throughout my twenty years of life. On the other hand, I really want to know what others experienced and thought with their families, and I really want to know how they conceive not only their family, but also my family as well. Therefore, I decided to interview three people whose situations are all different each other. One does have stepmother because of divorce, which is somewhat same as my family, but they do have “mother.” The other even does not know his mother’s face because of his mother’s death when he was too young. The last one is with the normal family. Instead of picking friends who are in same situation as me, I rather chose three of my friends who are all in different sides. I really want to get idea about how they conceive their family and also my family.

Therefore, I firstly interviewed the guy named Jalen Lee. He is freshman at Emory University, and he does stepmother for his family because of his parents’ divorce. The interview with Jalen was very interesting, but sometimes I was afflicted at his story as well. Though I, right now, do not blame my dad and love my dad, he really resented and blamed their parents. Here are some interesting parts that I have with Jalen.

“I always thought that I enjoyed the time with my dad, because he gave so much impact in my life. However, we do not have moms. How do you feel about it first?”

“It seems like you don’t know about me. I have two moms, my biological mother and my stepmother. However, I don’t call them as parents.”

“Why? They are still parents in law? And even though my parents divorced, I still call them parents.”

“Because they didn’t and still don’t care about me. They did not care about my happiness, and what they did is just making me to study and giving money to spend. I could not feel true love from them.”

Jalen’s interview was interesting because he did not accept their parents as “real parents.” He rather said that his brother was the only one person who cared Jalen. He said that brother was the only one whom he can talk with and share his thoughts with. He also repeated that “my parents are not real parents,” and “I don’t call them parents” as well. He really misses his mother, and he rather hates his dad, which can be really different for me. He also commented that he really suffered with grades and his whole life in the last semester because his parents poked and forced him to study rather than expressing the cheer and showing love to him. He said that “your life seems happy even you usually don’t live with your mom, and it is so interesting.” Jalen’s case was totally in opposite side compared to mine.

The next interviewer was Maxwell Kang, who is three-year friend and also my best friend and roommate. Maxwell’s story is also special for me. Michael lost his mother when he was three years old because of accident, and he still can know his mother’s face only through with pictures he took with his mother when he was baby. There were also impressive parts in the interview that I had with Maxwell.

“You are in same shape as me. I know you don’t have mother in daily life, and I don’t have my mom in my daily life as well. Don’t you feel loneliness?”

“No, I didn’t. because my father and my aunt cared me a lot, there are no times that I thought about my mom.”

“It’s interesting. So, you don’t feel any emptiness even though you don’t have mother?”

“Yes, my father and my aunt are always with me.”

“But I remember you lived alone, I thought you feel really alone.”

“No, I was and am fine with my life right now.”

Maxwell’s persistence and positiveness toward his situation shocked me a lot. Even though he did not have his mother for most of lifetime, he habitually said that “I am fine without my mom, and I don’t really care about it.” I had the time when I really missed my mom, but I was really surprised that he could stay strong for all time in his life, though there wasn’t presence of mother for whole time. The interview was very enjoyable because I can see different conceptions toward the only parent and the life without mother.

My last interviewer was Trevis Song, who goes to the college in Sydney. He was one of my best childhood friends whom I have, and he is one who is with both father and mother. Trevis’s remarks toward my family was very interesting. I explained more of my situation and family history, which is not like all other interviews, to Trevis to hear more about his remarks toward my family as well. Trevis said, “I grew up with lovely father and lovely mother, and I really think that you are in poor situation because you are not with mother.” He said that he had unmeasurable love from his parents and he pitied that I did not have mother for most of my life. He also said that having both parents is very important element in all of people’ lives. Finally, he underscored that having mother would make “positive” difference in my life.

I felt very blessed to have these three interviewers because I could see many different perspectives on their families and on my family. Jalen said that parents are not important, and Maxwell said that his mother is not rememberable because he cannot remember the time with his mother, and Trevis said that having both parents is very significant concept in all people’ lives. I finally got the idea that one word describes the whole difference in all people’ lives: environment. For instance, because Maxwell’s mother died early, Maxwell cannot know the importance of his mother. However, because I had the time with my mom for more than nine years, I, for some periods, missed and cried because of my mom’s absence. I always think that environment judges people to be on their particular and special “destiny.”

On the other hand, even though many people always think that my environment, which is without mom, is very miserable, I always and still think that I am really blessed with my dad. I still love my mom as the best, and I always think she also cares me, and this is the reason why I had hardship just after the divorce. However, my dad is also the best person I know. Whatever family situations that came to me throughout my life, I was ready to win with my dad. And still seeing and having time with my dad, which can be ordinary for some people, always makes me to smile and touches my heart.