Ben Sabin

English 101

Heather Julien

Autoethnography

Close Cousins

 Courtney Cox said, "Cousins are people that are ready made friends, you have laughs with them and remember good times from a young age, you have fights with them but you always know you love each other, they are a better thing than brothers and sisters and friends cause there all pieced together as one." She couldn't have said it any better. I grew up with five really close cousins that have all influenced my upbringing. They are very special to me and I have a special connection with each one of them. Cousins are friends that will love you forever and will always be there for you. I’m so privileged to have such close cousins and I appreciate that everyday.

        My family means everything to me. I am so grateful to have people that care about me so much. My extended family includes fourteen people in it. My grandpa's name is Carl and my grandma's name is Bobby. They had three daughters: Jill, Wendy, and Debbie. They all married to wonderful husbands, Jill married Steven and had two kids, Hannah and Jesse, Wendy married Jay and had Aliza and me, and Debbie married Ian, and had Jack and Alex.

 Long Beach Island isn’t just an island on the Jersey Shore for me. It is family, it is my childhood, and it is my present and future. Ever since I was born I have been going down to Long Beach Island (LBI). My grandparents have had the house for 50 years and it’s become tradition that our whole extended family goes down during the summer. The house is the one artifact that has always been there. It represents more than just a house; it represents family, past experiences, and vivid memories.

         Every single person in my family has played a major role in my life. Growing up going to LBI every summer with my family is something I am privileged enough to have. My family means everything to me and this LBI house has been the artifact that brings everyone together. Waking up in the house to the loud coffee grinder to BBQs on the porch to charades in the living room, this house means everything to me and I do not know where I would be with out it.

 The LBI house bring the whole family together and it is the best feeling in the world. My cousins are like my brothers and sisters to me. I have lived in Montclair, NJ my whole life and when I was in kindergarten, my cousins Hannah and Jesse moved to Montclair from NYC. They literally moved around the corner from us and I basically see them every day. My uncle and aunt Jill and Steven are basically like second parents to me. If my parents are out of town or stuck at work, Aliza and I would go over there for dinner and their house is like our second home.

 I interviewed Hannah and Jesse in sort of a narrative form. They wrote a little about how growing up with such close cousins may have been the best experience in their lives. Hannah shares here narrative here; “Growing up living around the corner from my cousins has been an amazing experience, and one that I took for granted until I began to hear my friends talk about how they see their cousins once or twice a year for holidays. My grandparents have a beach house which all the cousins and families comfortably fit in, and spend time together at over the summer. Growing up with a cousin who is the same age as you, and another who is two years younger and the same age as your cousin truly gave me the experience of what it would be like to have a big family with lots of brothers and sisters.

         My cousin Aliza has always been my best friend, and it was like growing up with a sister. Especially now that we are older, she is my confidant who I talk to everyday, and fight with just like a sister. We’ve gone skiing together over winter breaks since I can remember, and my cousin Ben and I would be in the same ski groups, which always made me so comfortable in ski school. Always having a support system and best friends who are also your family is something I’m truly grateful for, and family vacations always become so much more enjoyable. Our family friends own a farm in Pennsylvania, which we have spent spring breaks in together, hiking, playing board games, and doing the typical farm activities.

        Having a small family is nice, and feels very personal, yet going on vacations with your extended family is always an awesome experience. I have cousins on my dad’s side who are around the same age as my brother and I, who I am fairly close to as well, yet I cannot imagine spending a week together on vacation with. The ability to see my cousins every day is my favorite part about my family, and the best decision our moms made. I have dreams to live in different parts of the world, but what I always hesitate at is the dreadful thought of living far away from my cousins, or raising a family in a place where they would not grow up with their cousins. I truly would urge every family to allow their children to have the same amazing experience I had growing up around the corner from my cousins, and having one of the closest families I know.”

 As you can see Hannah shares the same feelings about growing up with close cousins. I was close with my sister Aliza but not always super close. She is two years younger than me and we have always been at the same schools. So I have always watched out for her and showed her the way. Aliza loves her cousin Hannah very much and she is like a sister to her. Hannah deals with all the girl stuff with her and is one of the best role models in her life.

 Aliza’s narrative is very well written and heart felt, “Every summer I look forward to sand between my toes, beach hair, and “No-Name Pie”—the best pecan-coconut pie on Long Beach Island. These are all things that come with being blessed with a big, loving family and a beach house. As Memorial Day weekend approaches every May, I can’t contain my excitement. Soon my whole family will be together: my parents, my two aunts and uncles, five cousins, and the best grandparents in the world. Although I see my cousins every single day of the year (they live around the corner from us at home) being together at the beach house is a whole different level of closeness (in a good way, of course). I get to share a room with my cousin/best friend Hannah, the only other girl cousin in my family.

       Walking into our room for the first time at the start of the summer is the most blissful feeling the world. I can barely explain how happy it makes me seeing our clean room for the first time all year, and knowing so many more memories will be made at this house once again. Recently Hannah and I decided our room would be better with one big bed to share, rather than two stiff twin beds. Naturally, being the creative minds that we are, we decided to push our beds together, it was the size of a king bed, and one of the best ideas we’ve ever had. We get to cuddle all the time now!

            I feel so blessed that I have cousins that I can call my best friends. Hannah is like the sister I never had, and her brother Jesse is the twin brother I never had. Everyone at our high school was envious of my close relationship with Hannah, they would always say, “Wow I wish I was that close with my cousin, I never even see them.” And it would just remind me how lucky I am to have Hannah and Jesse in my life. Growing up with close cousins has been a huge part of my life and has shaped me to be the person I am today. If I didn’t have Hannah to guide me and be my best friend, I don’t know where I would be today.”

 My grandma and grandpa, Bobby and Carl have been some of the most influential people in my life. They have impacted my life in indescribable ways and have been there for me since day one. I literally and figuratively wouldn't have been here without them. My Grandpa Carl always know what to say and has the most insightful advice. He has taught me a lot. He loves taking his grandchildren out to breakfast. It would be one of my favorite things to do with my cousins when we were younger to sleep over my grandparent’s house and then go out to breakfast the next morning. If there were one thing my grandpa Carl talks about most, it'd probably be his grandchildren. I don't think I've known any other man who loves his grandchildren as much as he does.

         My Grandma Bobby is the sweetest woman. She used to be a kindergarten teacher when she was younger, and she has raised her grandchildren properly. She always likes to keep tradition and she always has hosted Thanksgiving in the past. She loves decorating the house with turkeys, fall leaves, and gourds and squash. I remember growing up listening to pilgrim children's stories she told us and playing little thanksgiving games.

 Charades in our family is always an adventure when we play it. It can be really fun especially with all 14 of your relatives playing in the same room. It's a struggle to get everyone together after a dinner though. My mom really puts an effort to get the whole family to play charades, so she spends time making the categories and sometimes they're good ones like movies, TV shows, and bands, but this one time she made a category titled "Grandma and Grandpa's friends." No one knew what to remotely do to act out such a category. The category had the last names of my grandparent’s friends and it was just a ridiculous and no one was able to act it out, so we just discarded that category. When we play with the whole family we usually play girls against guys. The girls are pretty good at charades and usually win, but my uncle Steven and cousin Jesse are always good on the guys team.

             The worst players by far are my dad and grandp. My dad uses these ridiculous hand gestures that no one understands. We never go over the signals before the game regarding how many words and syllables the word has, but he feels like we do and tries to communicate it to our team, but it never works. It is very funny though to see him try to act it out. My grandpa on the other hand doesn't usually know the contemporary movies in the category he gets. One time he got "Batman: Dark Knight" and had no idea how to act it out to us, and it was one of the funniest turns I've ever seen and everyone was laughing hysterically. In the end, charades brings the family together for some good laughs and funny times. I will always remember our charades experiences at LBI.

 My cousins and family are everything to me. I am so privileged to have 14 relatives that I am so close with and love very much. I do not know what I would do without every member of my family. From my uncle Ian who I love playing golf with to my aunt Jill who is one of the most outgoing and sociable people I know. They teach me everything, how to act, how to be mature, when to take risks and when to hold back. Every aspect of my personality and being has rooted from my family and I’d say I have influenced my cousins as much as they have influenced me.