

# THE REAL JULIA

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While at oxbow I had shifts in identity. I cut my hair. I thought I would hate it. I didn't. It started with the Walden Project, a project that every Oxbow kid has to go through. It was something along the lines of trying something new for a week as an experiment. My first idea was to wear a bald cap for a week because I wanted to know what it would be like to not have my hair. My hair was so important and special to me, I didn't even consider the thought of actually cutting it, because at that point the thought seemed absurd to me. After some convincing from Jennifer, and some other friends, I decided to cut it off. Sally said that If I did, she would make a film out of it, and Parker said that if I went through with it she would cut her hair off with me, so I did. I held it as a ceremony where everyone can come in, write an affirmation about me, and in return got to cut off a piece of hair from my head. I remember thinking about how there's no turning back now, and how angry my mom is going to be with me after this. I couldn't see myself, but everyone's reactions were positive, people said I was brave, and that I looked great. I remember looking at myself for the first time in the mirror after the cut, I was relieved that I didn't look like an adult-baby-monster that I had once pictured in my head days before the cut. I then realized that I don't need hair to still be myself. After the cut, I wanted to get to know myself better. So, for final project I talked with Jennifer, and she offered several questions related to identity that could help me get a jump start on figuring out my identity. Answering the questions at first was boring and confusing. Until Alex suggested answering each question in a narrative format. Writing is difficult for me and often unenjoyable. Finding my flow in answering these questions in narrative format was not bad. These are the identity questions I was given, here are my answers:

**-Beyond your external appearance, who is the "real" Julia?**

Beyond external appearance, the "real" Julia is a very nice, caring, giving, FUNNY and sensitive person. I wear a lot of color in terms of clothes and hair, my mom is a hairstylist and she fulfills my hair dying needs, whether it's pink, neon green, half yellow, half pink or half orange, half blue, she always comes through. I was always taught to be these things from a young age, My mom comes from a country like town called Tawas Michigan, and she grew up with the morals of being a very nice and caring person, and she very much is that, she taught my sister and I these morals as a kid and I have carried these characteristics with me today. I'm a very giggly person with a weird sense of humor. I allow myself to be vulnerable, and to be very open with people. I've been described as a very positive spirit that allows me to uplift moods and that's something that I'm very proud of. I'm a very sensitive person and I cry all the time, it's not always sad tears, sometimes I cry for no reason at all. Maybe it's Hormones - I don't know.

How my friends describe my personality (in words):

Pearl: Positive, emotional, caring, curious, entertaining, selfless, approachable

Ella: very open, a genuine person, "no walls"

Sydney: colorful, energetic, uplifting

Sally: hilarious, optimistic, spirited, encouraging, nice, loud, sharing

Wiley: interesting and amusing

**-How has your family shaped you?**

My family has shaped me to be a very nice and caring person, I live with my Mom, my dad and my sister in a average size apartment in Boston. My parents are hard workers with two businesses and two apartment buildings we own (including the one we live in). It's a little intimidating because both my mom and dad came from small country like towns as kids and they

always tell my sister and I how much it sucked and at young ages they both risked everything to move to the city. My dad was born and raised in Guatemala and at the age 14, he fled to the U.S, and he explained how crazy the trip was. My parents always tell my sister and I all the time how good we have it and how we need to fight and work for our success like they did. That mentality has always influenced me to put a lot of work and effort into my art pieces, and to think as if that making that art I could possibly make a living, and maybe with a enough fighting or hard work I could!

**-How has religion shaped you? What is your personal relationship to God and spirituality?**

My religion hasn't really shaped me just because I don't really pay attention to what it's all about, and also I don't get what it's all about, I'm just constantly told to "walk like Jesus" from my mom, whatever that means. My parents are very religious and We go to church every single Sunday. My sister and I even alter serve. Let me take you through what an average Sunday looks like for the Donis family. Everyone wakes up early and has breakfast at the table, while I'm still sleeping, and I don't wake up till last minute. I eat my breakfast, which is usually like a breakfast sandwich, super fast while my sister nags that we are going to be late, and my dad nags about how I "need to be ahead and not behind". My sister and I walk to church because it's literally a block away from our house yet we always find ourselves to be late. Reina and I are altar servers so that consists of wearing big white gowns with cool looking assassins creed hoods, though we can't wear the hoods (bummer), we tie a thick white rope around our waist, and we top off the outfits with a wooden cross necklace around our necks. There are many altar servers at the nine o'clock mass, with kids ranging in age from 8 to 18. Reina and I usually take on the "sitting with priest" job where we sit in these red velvet stools with no back support for an hour alongside our father Marick. He's a Polish guy with a thick accent that makes it very difficult to make out anything he's saying, not that I'm listening anyway. When sitting on the altar, my mind just drifts off somewhere else. Sometimes I think about what would happen if our weekly routine of praying, standing, kneeling and singing was cut off by some cartoonish dinosaur with sunglasses on a skateboard bursting through the front doors with a boom box on their shoulder and skating through the aisle while squirting everyone in the face with silly string. I've found It's the best way to make the time go by. After church we usually go to Sunday school, but recently I've graduated so I go straight home. I'm often asked by the older ladies in the church to help out the Sunday school teachers pass out snacks and such, but I'm often hesitant. I've seen the hardcore Christian teens my age that graduate Sunday school, and then stick around. Once you help out, you can never leave. Soon you become a Sunday school teacher yourself and feel required to attend every event hosted by the church. Then you're stuck donating your busy life to unpaid labor.

**-How has geography shaped you?**

Growing up in Boston, I feel that the city has shaped me to be an independent person at an early age, like with using the MBTA as my main source of transportation for any place I need to get to, with having a paying job as soon as I turned 14, with having access and exposure to different programs and places and people, it's made me a more social person, and just more adventurous and excited for different opportunities to come.

**-What activities and experiences have shaped you? (music, art, diet, etc.)**

One experience that has shaped me would have to be the summer camp I went to as a kid.

It was called Harborside, and it was a great camp that had awesome field trips and a huge indoor community pool. Before summer camp I was considered a very shy and scared kid. Summer camp was a safe place for me to come out of my shell. Summer camp was my childhood, it's where I learned about being a good person, and how to interact with other kids and authority figures. My counselors has shaped me to be the person I am today, and not to mention it was such a fun place that had cool things to do every single day from laser tag, the movies, to cool carnivals.

Another activity that has shaped me to be the person I am today would have to be art. As a young kid I was always told I was going to be an artist, I was always drawing, doodling, and creating little comics and stories, and making dollhouses out of paper, and cut outs from Ikea catalogs. I was very creative from a young age, my sister and I would play pretend for hours upon hours and make games in our little world together, and I feel that that creative side of me is definitely still a part of me today. My mom was a big supporter of my talent, and helped me attend art classes at the Massachusetts College of Art during middle school, and would take me to art galleries from local artists and later was a huge help in my acceptance to Boston Arts Academy, the high school I'm currently attending. Basically art has always been a big part of my life, and has shaped me to be the artistic and creative person I am today.

**-What are your values?**

My values are heavily shaped from my parents, growing up, my mom has always taught me to be a very nice, loving, caring, and sensitive person. To always be nice to my friends and nicer to my enemies. As a young kid, she told me that I was always very loving and sweet and a relatively well behaved kid. I think I still take most of those aspects of myself today, I've learned though, that my niceness can often be taken as weakness and I have been taken advantage of before because of my niceness. I used to have a friend freshman year who would always borrow money from me, and never pay me back, though she said she would, and I let her because I thought I was just being nice. Turns out she was super manipulative and would always act as if I'm being mean unless I do what she says. She did this all in a very sly way that didn't seem manipulative until after hanging out with her, then I would think about it and realize later on that I'm being taken advantage of.

**-What has changed in your life and what do you credit for that change?**

My mom cares about exterior image, and that has passed on to me. Since coming to Oxbow, and being away from my mom, I've realized that those things don't matter as much to me.

I wanted to get to know myself better. This project helped me do that by helping me realize that my true identity is what's on the inside. I learned that my visual image is not what represents me as a person. Before coming to oxbow I based my identity in this, but during my time here I chose to make my identity more about my actions and my thoughts. I feel that I like this part of myself better, and I'm happy about the changes I've embraced in my life.