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MAKING BOYS' CARE WORLDS VISIBLE

This paper is based on longitudinal, ethnographic research with young people from ages 10-18 growing up in urban, low-income, immigrant communities of color and how they represented their everyday lives and family-school relationships through photography and video. The author analyzes the similarities and differences between the boys' and girls' perceptions, participation in, and representations of their care worlds and how this shapes their identities. The article features the themes of love, care and solidarity that were central to the boys' understandings and identities, re-casting widely held assumptions about the crisis of Black boyhood that preoccupy current educational discourse.

Keywords: gender identity and carework, myths of manhood, critical childhood studies, care inequality

It is 9:00 a.m. and six-year old Antonio, stands in the doorway of the school's main office. He and his brother Cesar live in a public housing complex around the corner from the elementary school in an urban district that serves working poor families of color, most of whom are immigrants. Miss Corey, the school secretary greets him with a smile, "did you just get here?" Antonio nods his head yes. "Your mother didn't wake you up this morning?" Antonio rocks back and forth. "Did your brother already go to his classroom?" Antonio grins from ear to ear and nods his head yes. "Go ahead on, I won't write you up." Before Antonio is out the door Miss Corey remarks to me, a researcher in the school, "He's covering for his mother. It is a tough home situation, so tough. His mom has two jobs and works double shifts every other weekend at a nursing home. His older brother is in third grade and has been getting himself to school since kindergarten, and now he's responsible for getting Antonio to school too. They are late all the time."

Miss Corey is sympathetic to the predicament of the boys' single mom, an immigrant from Dominican Republic who works tirelessly to provide for her children, and so she reluctantly stretches school rules to accommodate the situation. She feels

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it isn't fair to punish the boys because of their mother's work demands. Indeed, Miss Corey, herself a single mom, explains that were it not for the fact that her own children are on the "early school schedule" making it possible for her to drop them off on her way into work, she doesn't know how she would manage.

This interaction speaks volumes about the relationship between the organization of schooling, educational disparities, and individual lives. It has social significance and personal resonance for Antonio and Cesar that reaches deep into their identity formation. Indeed, children glean insight into their social position and value in society when they observe how their forms of family care are viewed by authorities. Using their ears as "tuning forks to gauge the emotional tenor of adult talk" (Hochschild, 2003, p. 172), children listen to what is said about their family care and must find ways of making sense of it.¹ What they hear is laced with moral messages about who or what is "good" and "bad" parenting; and children learn early how to listen for and read signs of anxiety or stigma about their upbringings.² How does Antonio hear Miss Corey's remark that he is "covering for" his mother? How does Cesar understand his caregiving role?

To understand what is at stake requires an analysis that examines the complex interplay of structural forces, cultural and moral imperatives, and personal meanings and identities that take shape within unequal networks of care in which we are all implicated. In this article, I consider how gender identities—a sense of boy-ness and girl-ness—unfold in the context of unequal care worlds—a topic we know very little about from the perspective of young people themselves.

This question of how boys and girls see themselves and their care worlds emerged in my longitudinal research with children growing up in working-class, mostly immigrant families and how they represented their home, school and community lives and relationships through photography and video. In this paper I explore the similarities and differences between the boys' and girls' representations, and then consider the themes of love, care and solidarity,³ that were central to the boys' takes on their care worlds, which I argue re-cast widely held assumptions about boyhood. But first, a brief discussion of the unequal distribution of care resources is necessary.

CARE INJUSTICE

Family care worlds are organized around two key institutions: work and school. To navigate the demands of both institutions, families draw upon a constellation of resources that include race/ethnic privilege, neighborhood context, immigrant status, relationship status, transportation, family size, physical health—not to men-

¹ See Hochschild (2003) about children as eavesdroppers and what they learn from parental negotiations about their care; and Romero (2001) about what children learn from being taken by their mothers to their jobs.

² See Thorne (2001) for her discussion of reading signs of care—across lines of social class, race and gender, and across cultural divides and child-rearing philosophies.

³ I am indebted to Kathleen Lynch's (2007) model of care and its three concentric circles—primary, secondary and tertiary—where care is given and received, and where each level of care requires a form of work: love labor in primary relations (e.g., families), care work in secondary care relations (e.g., schooling) and the collaborative agency involved in forming bonds of solidarity (e.g., friendships). Her model helped me to listen to the youth talk about care in new ways.

tion the (in)flexibilities and benefits (or not) of workplaces (e.g., health care, vacation and family leave options), as well as the income available for all manner of market-based services of care. Ultimately, a family's access to care resources "make[s] the crucial difference in whether a parent can work, or whether a child is safe" (Hansen, 2005, p. 10).

Resources for family care are unequally distributed among families around the globe, rooted in larger political forces including economic restructuring, a global retreat from social reproduction, and the state's retrenchment of its commitment to the social wage (Katz, 2001). These forces have resulted in increasing shortage of people, resources and time to meet the care needs of children, but especially those growing up in poor and working-class communities of color. Global circuits of care inequality work like this: there is a transnational migration of female childcare and domestic workers from poor nations of the global South who work for below-minimum wages and who must either a) leave their own children behind with family relatives (due to U.S. visa programs and immigration policies that prevent these mothers from bringing their children) or, b) leave their children at home to care for themselves. This division of care labor serves to "subsidize" social reproduction in wealthier nations and to solidify class inequality in the United States (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003; Glenn, 2010; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Katz, 2001; Parrenas, 2001). There is also a growing demand for all kinds of carework (elder care, health care, child care, etc.) that draws low wage mothers' caring labor out of the family and into the labor market (Dodson & Luttrell, 2011; Hansen, 2005; Harrington, 2000).

This is the paradox facing Antonio and Cesar's mom and so many others like her. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, by 2008, seven out of ten mothers were employed and, based on the growth of the carework job sector many mothers—disproportionately women of color, immigrant, and single mothers—are working in these low paid and demanding jobs. In general, low-wage jobs, in service, retail, and care work pay \$8-\$12 per hour, leaving families barely able to cover the basics: rent, food, transportation, heat, healthcare, and utilities (Shulman, 2003). Furthermore, these kinds of jobs are more likely to encroach on routine family time, before and after school, or in the evenings and weekends and often involve irregular schedules and unpredictable hours. Ironically, taking one of these low wage inflexible jobs can result in immediate losses. Economist Randy Albelda calls this the "cliff effects" of post-welfare policy when even the smallest wage increase can make a family ineligible for public benefits such as housing, healthcare, and food stamps which are essential to their survival.

Lisa Dodson and I have written elsewhere about the untenable choices low wage working mothers face, the stigma they endure, the "moral hierarchy" that guides their choices to put their children first (Hennessey, 2005), and the strategies they use to close the care gap, including relying on children to ensure family survival (Dodson & Luttrell, 2011). We point out that social science research indicates that children's involvement in family care is complicated—at once a source of pride and self-regard, as well as ambivalence and constraint (Burton, 2007; Burton et al., 1996; Luttrell 2003, 2006; Orellana et al., 2001; Romero, 2001). Yet, despite their wide spread involvement in family care networks, children's essential capabilities and remarkable achievements in this realm go unrecognized in most work and family and schooling discourse. In fact, children's caring strategies may even be turned

into deficits, treated as signs of negligent parenting and inappropriately adultified children, stigmatizing both mothers and children. Should it surprise us that an U.S. Department of Education survey about dropout rates indicates that shouldering family responsibilities plays a major role in decisions to leave school?

This is how unequal family care resources contribute to educational inequality. For children and youth to be “free” to learn, depends upon carework—mothers and other family members—who physically and emotionally care for children and youth, provide transportation, help with homework, navigate a maze of services to ensure health and well-being, who advocate for the proper educational placement, establish before and after-school routines, and so on (Griffin & Smith 2005). In poor and low-income families, these careworkers also include children and youth themselves who not only work to provide direct care and supervision for siblings and extended kin, taking them to doctor’s appointments, walking them home after school, and cooking meals, but also support siblings in school life, helping with homework and translating for non-English speaking family members at doctor’s appointments, during parent-teacher conferences, paying bills, to name a few (Orelana, 2010). Sociologist Linda Burton (1996, 2007) calls this phenomenon the “adultification of childhood” that characterizes poor and low-income family and community life. She writes that adultification is a critical coping strategy for poor and low-income families; yet is “out of sync” with contemporary school demands of intense and early achievement for future success. Low-income family care strategies are at best unrecognized by middle-class teachers and school officials, and at worst, become the basis for penalizing students.

The United States is woefully behind the times when it comes to developing social policy regarding young caregivers. Recently, the National Alliance for Caregiving, in collaboration with the United Hospital Fund, conducted the first large-scale national survey of child caregivers in 2005. Their survey found 1.3 to 1.4 million, child caregivers between the ages of 8 and 18. Typically, these children attended a parent, a grandparent, or a sibling with a wide variety of caregiving tasks, such as bathing, feeding, toileting, shopping, meal preparation, taking medicines, and keeping the care recipient company.

We are used to thinking about care as one-way, with adults caring for children and not the other way around. And historically, caring for dependents (children and the elderly) has fallen to women; it has been seen as women’s work, even if men do it.

A question that has yet to be adequately explored is how boys’ family labor figures into the equation, and how masculinity gets constructed in and through boys’ participation in networks of care. To date, we know far more about girls’ family labor (Dodson & Dickert, 2004), including, for example, that working-class and middle-class mothers socialize their daughters into domestic labor differently (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). We can speculate that were Cesar a girl rather than a boy, his caretaking might be viewed differently, perhaps as not so out-of-the-ordinary, and instead an integral part of the choreography of family care.

THE CRISIS OF BOYHOOD

Within the public imaginary and according to the confines of current educational discourse, Antonio and Cesar, as urban, low-income boys of color, are more likely to be cast as “trouble” than as “caregivers”—stereotyped as “too aggressive, too

loud, too violent, too dumb, too hard to control, too streetwise and too focused on sports" (Noguera, 2008, p. xx). Amidst this slew of negative images, there is no mention of being *caring, loving, loyal, or emotionally attuned*. Even at young ages, as Ann Ferguson documents in her book, *Bad Boys: Public Schools and the Making of Black Masculinity*, Black boys in elementary school are seen as threatening, and are over-disciplined and criminalized more than cared for by routine schooling practices (2001).

These cultural stereotypes and expectations, as Niobe Way argues, have even worked their way into academic scholarship, leaving us unable to recognize what is before our eyes when we see boys—most especially their emotional capacities and desires. The grip of stereotypical representations of boyhood culture that feature aggression, violence, and a disassociation with all things associated with femininity for fear of being labeled homosexual narrows our gaze on boys. While there are different racialized stereotypes with which Asian, Black, Latino and White boys must contend, boys are all, for different reasons, assumed to be "emotionally illiterate" (Way, 2011, p. 6).

Perhaps it is these blinders that have created such a gap in our knowledge of boys' participation in family labor, how they read signs of care, and how this might shape their masculine identities. Or perhaps, as proponents of "critical childhood studies" would suggest, it is because adult researchers have focused more on who boys are becoming (seen as apprentice men) than on who they are, what they do, and what their own perspective on the world is (Hallet & Prout, 2003; James & Prout, 1997; Orellana, 2010; Qvortrup, 1994; Stephens, 1995; Thorne, 1987, 1993). In any case, to investigate links between boyhood culture(s) and care worlds requires new ways of looking and listening.

CHILDREN FRAMING CHILDHOODS AND LOOKING BACK

The public school in which my research took place is like many urban, elementary schools struggling to meet the federally imposed standards of *No Child Left Behind*. It is located in a neighborhood that is rich in racial, ethnic, national, linguistic, and some economic diversity; and in a northeastern, post-industrial city that has been home to diverse and shifting groups of immigrants since the turn of the twentieth century. *Children Framing Childhoods* was initiated in 2003 when I first visited the school's principal who was looking for strategies to help integrate immigrant parents and their children representing a range of nations including Albania, Iran, Kenya, Puerto Rico, and Vietnam into the school culture.

Of the 370 students enrolled at the school, 92% are eligible for free and reduced school lunch, 37% are White; 10% are Black; 18% are Asian and 35% are Hispanic.⁴ This context provided an unusual opportunity to investigate diverse, working-class children's understandings and experiences of the relationship between family, community and school and to explore how the children navigated social and cultural differences in the school setting.

⁴ These are the labels and percentages provided by the school; they do not publish records of immigrant status of the children. Students are eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch in schools if their family income is at or below 185 percent of the Federal poverty line. In the United States the percentage of students in a school receiving Free and Reduced Lunch is an indicator of the socio-economic status of a school.

My interest in self and identity formation, especially during life transitions and the experiences of being betwixt and between—whether in terms of home and new country and language, or between childhood and teenage-hood, led me to design a longitudinal, visual research project. I adapted principles of “photovoice”—putting cameras in the hands of young people and asking them to photograph their home, school and community lives, coupled with multiple opportunities to discuss the meanings and intentions they hoped to convey through their pictures as a means to trace how they characterized their identities over time.⁵ In the follow-up project, *Looking Back* (2010-2011), I was able to contact twenty-six (26) of the thirty-four (34) original participants, who were now attending six different high schools. These 26 young people were interviewed about their childhood photographs and asked to reflect upon the ways in which they and their lives have and have not changed. Twenty-two (22) participants then agreed to continue by taking photographs and making a video (using Flip camcorders) to document their contemporary life-worlds.⁶

Other researchers have noted that youth-generated photographs and videos can introduce content and topics that might otherwise be overlooked or poorly understood from an adult viewpoint and can trigger new information, memories, and meanings for the young participants (Clark, 1999; Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Collier, 1967; Harper, 2002; Mitchell, 2011; Mizen, 2005; Orellana, 1999; Pini, 2001; Rasmussen, 1999; Schwarz, 1989; Thompson, 2008). Still, there were no ready-made interpretive devices for analyzing young people’s audio-visual images, so I intentionally built into the study design multiple opportunities for the youth to make sense of and use their photographs and videos to *instruct* us (the adult researchers) about their meanings. I have written elsewhere about this dialogic and iterative interpretive methodology, what I have called “collaborative seeing” (Lico & Luttrell, 2011; Luttrell, 2010; Luttrell et al., 2011; Luttrell et al., in press). The themes described in the next sections emerged from conversations between the youth participants and a research team member during one-to-one interviews, and between the young people as they discussed each other’s photographs and videos in small groups.

MAKING CARE WORK VISIBLE

A celebration of care—who does it; what they do; how it is organized; what it looks like; how it feels; and why it matters—dominated the children’s images and explanations about why they had taken the photographs and what they had meant to convey. Their care narratives featured family members, neighbors, church members, and women in their school world (i.e. teachers, the school nurse, the secretary, principal and “lunch lady”); friends in their social world who were pictured as “always there” to protect against loneliness, sadness or troubles; siblings caring for them or their own self-care; and above all *mothers* who are the backbone.

⁵ See Clark-Ibanez (2004) for a discussion of PEI approaches. Photovoice research stresses participant-produced photographs that are specifically intended for an audience of people with power. Photographs are used to stimulate community/civic discussion about what changes are needed or demands need to be made. For examples, see Lykes (2001), Wang (1999), and Wang and Burris (1997).

⁶ The four young people who did not continue explained that they had work or family care responsibilities that kept them from participating.

CAREWORK IN SCHOOL

Both boys and girls took photographs of their (predominantly white, female) teachers, whose “care for students” was the centerpiece of their discussion. The children shared a common language of teaching as caring, pointing out, as Claire did, that her teacher “works not just to get paid, but to help us.” Reggie, Luis, and Malik all took pictures of the school principal explaining that “her job is to care about the school”; she is “good at her job because she gets special things for the school” and she “takes care of children who have problems.” Vincent took a photograph of the school nurse, saying “I admire her because she teaches us about how to take care of ourselves and our bodies, how not to do drugs and stuff.”

Both boys and girls, like Alanzo and Angeline, referenced the importance of reciprocity, expressing their desire to “help out” those who care for them. Alanzo photographed the school secretary explaining:

This is like people you admire, so I took a picture of her. *I: Why do you admire her?* She gives me a lot of stuff. She helps me out when I have a problem in class. I stay with her in the morning before school starts. So I work in the office to help her out.”

Angeline describes her photograph of Sue, the “lunch lady”:

I like her because she’s very nice ... she is really kind. I help her a lot with her work.... If we didn’t have her we would be starving, *starving [her emphasis]* and we won’t be able to learn. *I: Why?* How can we learn without no breakfast, no lunch, how can we learn like that? Our stomachs will be going “Give us some food!”

Angeline and Alanzo both pay tribute to those in school who care for them, connecting the arguably under-recognized role of school staff as vital for children’s learning and growth. Angeline’s tribute is reported with more emotional expressiveness, as she uses hyperbole and changes the register of her voice to virtually “sing Sue’s praises.” But in both cases, the children are reading these signs of care as grounds for reciprocity and they both indicate a sense of relational satisfaction through being “helpers.” Within the school context, the boys and girls were more similar than different in their perspectives about and relationship to care work.

CAREWORK AT HOME

Pictures representing family care networks dominate the 5th and 6th grade visual archive. Mothers (and maternal figures such as grandmothers and aunts) figured most prominently for both boys and girls. More often than not, mothers were portrayed in the kitchen, performing a key ceremony of domestic life—“feeding the family” (Devault, 1991). And kitchens-on-display (counter-tops, refrigerators, kitchen tables) as well as an inventory of valued household items were routinely featured—symbolizing, among other things, that the children are being *cared for*. Boys and girls began their accounts of these “feeding the family” photographs by

⁷ See DeVault (1991) for her discussion of research that documents a distinction between meals prepared for socializing in working-class compared to white-collar/pro-

talking about their mother's good cooking, emphasizing their favorite dishes (and in the case of immigrant children, especially dishes associated with their homelands). Girls and boys also made a point to describe the weekly social meals with extended families and what their mothers (as well as aunts and grandmothers) contribute to these events.⁷ Both girls and boys also tied their mother's cooking to school-based expectations, opening up a broader discussion about mother-child ties that secure them a valued place in school culture. For example, Thea explained that she took a picture of her mother preparing spring rolls in the kitchen because her mother had made them for a school event and "all the teachers loved them, so now she has to keep making them." Juan made a point to explain that his mother "used to bake cupcakes for school," but now she was "too busy" to cook since she got a second job.

A surprising theme in the data was the consistency with which children described their mothers in educational terms. First, in answer to the question, "take a picture of someone or something you admire" pictures of mothers were most common. Sebastian began his description by saying, "I admire her because she comes from a long line of intelligence." He explained that his mother came from Colombia and has worked hard since she arrived raising her three children and getting a "good job." He said he didn't know how she manages to do all this while still "being there for us all the time" and cooking his favorite meals of chicken and rice. Cheryl emphasized her mother's many admirable qualities in the following ways, "I admire my mom." *What do you admire about her?* Well, she's 33, married, and loves to read, I know that."

Francine explained the photograph of her mom in the kitchen, saying, "She's very beautiful, I know that. She's also smart, even though she didn't go to college, but she's very, very smart."

Juan, quoted above, explained why he admires his mom: "cause she's creative with food. You can tell because the cupcakes are there. She's baking cupcakes for the cupcake sale. They were gone quick." He gazes at the picture and says with palpable emotion, "I love her so much, I could just explode from too much. That's why I love her very much because she helps me with a lot of things." *What else does she help you with?* He says, "She helps me with my homework, and mostly, she helps me with being a child." *How does she do that?* "With mama's rules, do this, do that, clean up your room. But I don't mind because I love her."

In thinking about how children read signs of anxiety or stigma about their family care and upbringings, it is noteworthy that the boys and girls described the role of their mothers in relationship to educational values. As if to counteract negative evaluations, the children positioned their mothers as achievers according to dominant educational values—as "intelligent" "very smart," even without a college diploma; a promoter of literacy; a source of help with homework; and an effective "teacher" of "how to be a child." While the themes of love and care—and of willingness to work hard to support children—emerged throughout, some children insisted that their mothers also be recognized as "school-competent," a value

professional-class households; meals prepared for socializing are more likely for family groups in working-class families, while in white-collar/professional households meals are for "entertaining" guests.

understood to be the basis of how mothers are judged in the public world. That the children went to such great lengths to photograph their mothers—and to extol their mothers' educational value—speaks to their perceptions that they must manage/protect their mothers' images as caregivers in the face of authorities (including researchers) who might view them otherwise. Moreover, by projecting their mother's image as valued and accomplished, they, by extension, assert their own value and self-regard.

Alongside this shared vocabulary of mother's educational value, the boys and girls both emphasized their *gratitude* towards mothers and the theme of *maternal sacrifice*. For example, Christopher took a picture of his mother, still in her nurse's aide uniform, standing in "her new living room that she's been waiting for years to get done." He pointed out the floor covering that his mother had selected and his step-father had installed and the new television, saying, "I most admire my mom cause of everything she does for us; it is tough, I don't know how she does it, doing everything for us." He went on to explain that the family can now gather in the living room to watch television, except for his mother "who is too busy to sit down and watch, she's working all the time cooking and cleaning, and taking care of us so there's a lot of things she can't do." Reggie, also took a picture of his mother in her uniform, despite her suggestion that she change her clothes. He said, "I wanted to show that I admire how hard my mom works." While these boys' mothers' family labor is all but invisible to the larger society, and their carework jobs underpaid, they both seem to be recognizing the invaluable nature of their mother's public and private labor, including its costs.

MAKING CLASS AND GENDER VISIBLE IN CAREWORK

Boys and girls used their photographs to describe complex after-school care arrangements and weekend routines that are organized to accommodate parents' work schedules. They described divisions of labor within and extending beyond individual households. They reported helping out on adult job sites; accompanying young siblings to and from school; going to neighbors before school to eat breakfast and pack their lunch; organizing themselves into groups to travel to after-school destinations that changed daily; and coming to school early and staying late "hanging out" with school personnel to accommodate parent work schedules. They also showed themselves in pictures "hanging out" after school and on weekends with siblings and cousins generating their own leisure activities (watching TV, playing video games) or completing domestic chores, rather than participating in the many self-development after-school and weekend activities typically afforded to middle-class children. Indeed, their versions of family care did not conform to a middle class norm—of intensive parenting, after-school lessons and tutors, and summer camps—a model of "concerted cultivation" that sociologist Annette Lareau (2003) notes characterizes middle-class child-rearing.⁸ Unlike children growing up in middle-class families whose scheduled activities tend to direct family life and

⁸ Lareau (2003) refers to the working-class version of child rearing as the "accomplishment of natural growth" and attributes the advantage afforded to middle-class children to the fact that they have a competitive edge in school settings that emphasize individual achievements over family responsibilities and obligations.

parent's schedules, sometimes at the expense of the needs of the family as a whole, these children emphasized their embeddedness in an often multigenerational family network where they are not only encouraged, but valued for their contributions.

That said, there were interesting differences in how the boys and girls represented their domestic labor.

Allison proudly points to herself in her photograph, taken by sister and tells the interviewer:

And this is me going to fold the laundry, *all* the laundry [*her emphasis*]. I usually do that every day of the week; I do it to help my mother out. When she picks us up [*at her aunt's house*] she's usually too tired so I do this to help her out.

Photographs of and reference to their housework—doing laundry, dishes, vacuuming, sweeping—and child-minding were found far more often among the girls than boys. Three things interest me about the way girls represented their domestic labor: First, that they tied their work to their mother's tiredness and need for help. Second, that the girls displayed/staged their completed domestic tasks (or implementations of their work, such as vacuum cleaners) in ways that indicate their pride of place in the ritual of domestic life. Third, that alongside expressions of pride were also expressions of ambivalence.

Ten-year old Nia's care narrative is a good example. She began by explaining that she took a picture of herself because she is proud of her family and because she helps out with her younger sisters, serving as a "role model." Indeed, most of her photos were taken at home and featured her activities cleaning and caring for her sisters for whom she is responsible. She described a photograph of a telephone saying, "When my cousins call on the weekend, I say, maybe I'll come over later after I'm finished with all the cleaning." She went on to explain:

I'm always helping around the house, because it's always a mess. Ebony [*her sister*] she always says, "I want to be like you." And I say, "no you don't." And she says, "I'm going to help you clean today." And I go, "You are? Really?" And she's like, "yeah." So she tries. I thank her, even if she doesn't help much, cause she wants to help.

Multiple emotions punctuate Nia's description: her pride in her family, the respect she gets from her sisters, the responsibility for their welfare that she shoulders (e.g., accompanying her sister to a birthday party at her parents' request because they are at work, which at least provides her "a little break") and her belief that her sisters should not aspire to be "just like me."

By contrast, with one exception, boys did not photograph themselves doing household labor, despite the fact that they often mentioned domestic responsibilities, like making their beds, washing dishes, or taking out the trash. They spoke of these "chores" as direct requests or "rules" made by mothers ("do this, do that, clean up your room," or "take your sister out to the playground," or "clear the table"). Second, when picturing themselves at home, the boys took far more photographs of themselves engaged in leisure activities than did the girls (video-gaming, sports, watching television). Third, boys more often stressed their gratitude and awe about being cared and cooked for by their mothers than did the girls. Recall how Sebastian emphasized how "tough" his mother's life is and how he doesn't know "how she does it, doing everything for us, but she does." Girls, like

Allison, were more focused on their mothers' need for help. Put somewhat differently, the ways in which the boys and girls positioned themselves within their care worlds reinforced stereotypical gender roles.

Social science research has established that there is a largely unaltered gender division of household labor that continues to hold women responsible for family care, whether they do it themselves or schedule and organize others to do it. Research also documents the privileges that continue to accrue to men as a result of women's labor (like more leisure time and sleep).⁹ So perhaps it is not so surprising to see these dynamics were re-presented in the children's images and narratives. Thinking in terms of cultural myths of manhood and its equation with autonomy and independence vs. womanhood and its equation with relationality and dependence, it is interesting to consider what the boys and girls thought was picture worthy about their family labor.

Women's dependent status on men—as mothers, housewives and daughter are not “absolute,” according to Finch and Groves (1983); rather, it is “conditional upon their being simultaneously *dependent upon by others* [my emphasis]. Thus, for many women, being a dependent is synonymous not with receiving care, but with giving it”—as illustrated by daughters Nia and Allison who depicted themselves as caregivers. By contrast, being dependent as boys and men, *is* associated with receiving care, as illustrated by sons like Sebastian and Christopher. This dependence is coupled with an expectation of being “family providers.” This is the unspoken bargain of men's “independence”—that men are dependent on women in the household in order to live up to the cultural expectations of being the primary family wage earner. Yet, this dependence is masked by the work that women (mothers, housewives, daughters) do *and* that women organize others to do, including boys and men. These tasks are understood as “women's work,” and when done by boys and men are seen as a way to support the women in the household, but not as expressions of their manliness.

Their ways in which Reggie and Sebastian portrayed and spoke of their family chores help to illustrate this last point. Among his 6th grade photographs, is picture of a television, flanked on one side by a window and the other side by open shelving with hanging clothes, and a bed covered with multi-colored blankets. Of this picture, Reggie said,

I took a picture of what I hate to do most—is clean. It is a picture of my room right before I have to clean it—it is a mess. Sunday is cleaning day for my house. *I: What do you have to do? Clean my bed, organize my bureau, clean the floor, organize my clothes. [Pointing to the shelving unit] These are my mom's clothes, these are the babies' clothes, and here are mine.*

Making sure to emphasize his dislike for housekeeping, Reggie *talks about* himself as an active participant in his family care network, but doesn't *show himself*. The photograph is not about who he *is*, but what he *does*. He is simply following the rules of the household. Similarly, Sebastian (who is in awe of his mother's sacri-

⁹ Trends regarding the gender division of labor have changed, most notably with fathers spending more time doing child-minding. For a review for these trends and how men and women perceive their labor see Bianchi, Robinson and Milke (2006). See Lynch et al. (2009) who find that primary care responsibilities continue to fall to women as an assumed natural order of things and experienced as a moral imperative.

fices), described a photograph of hands washing dishes—"My mother took this picture of me doing dishes. On weekends I wash the dishes, it is a rule of the house."

And then there is the example of Alanzo, an exception that proves the rule. His photographs of home life didn't feature anything related to housework, and instead featured sports equipment, video games, television sets, and toy collectibles that he is proud of. But in the 6th grade exit interview, talking about his experiences with the project, I asked him (and all the young participants) to fill in the blank, "what I know about myself is ____; what people don't know about me is ____." His answer provides an interesting twist. "That I like sports. What people don't know is that I clean my house. *Is that something that you do because you're asked to do it, or you just do it?*" "No, sometimes I just like do it myself, when my mom's out of the house."

What is "picture worthy" for boys and girls in relationship to their domestic labor is undoubtedly linked to gender, but in ever so complicated ways. Insofar as the children's photographs tell us something about the sort of activities they choose to be identified with, then, in regards to household labor, traditional gender-role expectations seem to be held in place. The picture gets more complicated when we consider what activities and people the boys *do* feature, and what this might suggest about their capacities and skills as *carers*.

For example, Reggie takes a photograph of fire fighters who he admires because they are "heroes who help their community." His own identification as a "helper" comes through strongly in his discussion of his set of 5th and 6th grade photographs. He takes several pictures of himself volunteering in the special education class where he goes to "help out kids who need extra attention"—something he decided to do on his own without any prompting from anyone, but just because "I like to make sure they aren't feeling bad." There is a picture of a young boy he has helped complete his math work because he is "behind," and a self-portrait of him recycling (which he confesses in 12th grade he posed to "make himself look good"). Still, Reggie's self-representation as a helper, his desire to make himself look *good*, had elements of what William Pollack would call the "boy code," including an emphasis on the delights of the "shenanigans" he and his friends enjoyed and their efforts to not appear too serious or "girlish." At the same time, Reggie revealed a sense of vulnerability about negotiating the dictates of the boy code when describing a photograph he took in 5th grade of two boys posing as if they were fighting. He explained that he took the picture because of his "concern about violence in my community" and how he worries that "people can get hurt." When I ask if he has ever been in a fight he says no, but that he has seen fights and it "scares" him, so he tries to avoid "kids who are trouble-makers." "Is that hard to do?" I ask. "Yeah, that's why me and my cousin, we aren't supposed to walk home after school, but we do it anyway sometimes." Recognizing a sense of danger and the necessity for protection, Reggie adds, "Me and my cousin have each other's back. We take care of each other."

Showcasing their care worlds and concerns, boys featured those upon whom they depend and those who depend upon them. And there was an extraordinary tenderness with which many of the boys pictured and spoke about the most vulnerable members. Posing for the camera as he cradled his baby sister, Louis said proudly, "My mother let me hold her because I am so gentle, and babies need spe-

cial care, you can't drop them or anything." Looking back on this photograph when he was in high school, Louis's eyes lit up with wonder about how "tiny" his sister was, how much she has grown, and his fondness for her. "Since I took care of her so much while my mom was working, we have a special connection."

LISTENING FOR LOVE, CARE AND SOLIDARITY

It was listening to boys describe photographs of their "best friends" that they were most expressive about their feelings about caregiving, tinged with expectations to be providers. For example, in 5th grade Alanzo explains his relationship with his "best friend:"

I took this picture to show my brother's best friend and mine's, and we were all together and playing a (*video*) game and we were cleaning up. I know him since first grade when I moved here. He's a good friend. *What makes him a good friend?* Well, he is always sticking up for me; he helps me. Like he doesn't just stay there and play, he helps me clean up. We go out together and we watch each other's back. We know each other a long time, we give each other money, we share when we go to the store and stuff. We help each other make money. *What do you do to make money?* We rake yards, (*pauses and smile*) we beg our moms. Say I need a dollar or he needs a dollar to go out, I give it to him.... You need good friends because they help you through a lot. They help you with your feelings. *How did you choose him as your best friends?* If I have a friend, and he asks me if I want to smoke or something after school. That's not the kind of friend that I would have. *How do you think he chose you?* Cause I understand him like either why he's sad, like if he is sad on his face expression. And if a bad day happened to him, I would be thinking about him and how he feels.

Alanzo echoed the words of many boys in the project who described the importance of "best friends" who support each other financially and emotionally, valuing reciprocity, protection, attunement to feelings, and love. Shaun explains:

This my best friend, Mathew. We split everything, if he doesn't have a drink, we get a cup or something. If we are playing a game and my friend is losing, I give him a point. If we go out, we have each other's back." *How do you have each other's back?* We protect each other's feelings. We have respect for each other. We love each other. *Tell me more.* Respect comes from the heart. It means to have courtesy. It means to be kind. If you want somebody to be nice to you, you have to be nice to them. Friends have to say 'I'm sorry' and admit when they are wrong. And I don't hold grudges. It destroys the relationship. My mother taught me this. She says, "the earth doesn't revolve around you."

Later in life, as 16 and 17 year olds, when Alanzo and Shaun look back on these photographs of best friends they both sigh, several times. They both remember why they took the picture, "he was my best friend." Alanzo and his friend are still "close," but "we both work now so we don't have much time to hang out together." Shaun is in touch with Mathew, but only on Facebook as they attend different schools. Shaun says his friendships "aren't the same as they were when we were younger," but he says he can't explain how or why. He laughs uncomfortably when I say, "I remember you saying in 6th grade how much you loved each other." "You remember that?" He says. "That's weird, but we were really, really close."

Reggie and Danny, on the other hand, have maintained their intimate male friendships—a theme that organizes the videos they made of their lives in the follow up study. Both young men played with the “buddy movie” genre and spoofed “manly-man” conventions by juxtaposing moments of innocence and experience, vulnerability and toughness, and presenting a collage of identities (caring older brother, jokester, trouble-maker, nerd, playboy, to name a few). Both young men opened their videos featuring their friends—“My Misfit, Ragtag Group of Just Awesome Friends Formerly Known As The FHS,” as Danny calls them (Luttrell et al., in press).

These themes of love, care and solidarity resound across the young men’s photographs and videos, demanding our attention and full response. By making their care worlds visible, by showing the contexts within which care is given and received (school, family, friendships), and by bringing to light the forms of work associated with the realization of care, these young people instruct us about what is key to their well-being. Equally important, by pointing to the centrality and complex gendered character of care in their lives, the young people give prominence to an affective domain of life that adult researchers and policy makers have yet to fully integrate into both theories and praxis related social and educational justice (Lynch et al., 2007; Lynch et al., 2009).

COLLABORATIVE SEEING

I began this paper wondering what insight Antonio and Cesar might glean about their social position and value in society when they observe how their forms of family care are viewed by school authorities. I argued that there are many pieces to the puzzle of how they read signs of care, including global care inequalities that have resulted in a shortage of people, resources and time to meet the social and educational needs of children, but especially those growing up in poor and working-class communities of color. Linked to this is a much touted boy crisis that is fueled by damaging stereotypes, especially about low-income boys of color, that continue to limit the nation’s eyesight when it comes to recognizing the full humanity and capacities of this population. This is also true for girls, but this is another paper. What the boys in *Children Framing Childhood* and *Looking Back* taught me to see is just how much their care worlds matter to them. Using their photographs and videos, the boys featured topics of love, care, solidarity, and emotional intelligence that are rarely seen as noteworthy. Instead, the current educational research preoccupation with low-income urban youth of color is one of deficit, of problem, brokenness, and stigma and it has worked to strip the humanness and humanization of teaching and learning (Brion-Meisels et al., 2010). There is an urgent need for spaces where educators can look beyond the limits of narrow assessment frames driven by high stakes testing, stereotypes, and failings, and train our gaze instead on young boys’ emotions, agency and funds of knowledge. To do this takes new strategies for looking and seeing—what I have referred to as collaborative seeing. *Collaborative seeing* seeks to witness, reflect on, and record a young person’s particular take on the world. It requires a discerning type of open-ended questioning; a “need-to-know-more” stance; an ability to critique and set aside harmful assumptions about race, class, gender and sexuality; and an impulse toward genuine attention and curiosity rather than evaluation and judgment (Luttrell, 2010). Because myths of manhood and boy codes consistently thwart boys efforts to assert them-

selves and their own self-definitions *and* because these same myths and codes filter what we as educators and researchers tend to pick up on, it is all the more imperative that young people and adults together find ways to expand our visions together.

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