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LINDA – Fieldnotes – Tuesday, October 22, 2007

Subject: Kitchen Table meeting  
Location: Wilson Garden, 122<sup>nd</sup> St (Douglass and Powell)  
Time: 11:20-2:10

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[This group seems to get together mostly to cook and socialize. The kids play together, occasionally somebody reads to a child, and Alex, the de facto leader, occasionally takes advantage of a teachable moment. Terry had mentioned at the garden tour that they were interested in unschooling, which I confirmed when I looked at their website. So far, this looks mostly like a giant playdate or mothers' group to me, although the kids are still very young. This is also a relatively affluent group, if not literally then in terms of family wealth, very much what I am calling "New Harlem." Everyone seems to take trips, or at least take travel for granted, with destinations including Alaska, Detroit, and this weekend, the Berkshires. Most of the group members do not live in central Harlem, although Alex and Luis used to. Alex and Luis are now in West Harlem along with Kim, and Tiffany and Terry live in East Harlem.]

Players in order of arrival:

- Linda
- Luis and Niko (Luis' and Alex's son)
- Tiffany, Xavier, and Zahara
- Alex
- Terry and Kai
- Laura (Terry's sister)
- Kim and Amir

7 adults, 5 kids

Adults appear to range from twenties (Laura and probably Tiffany) to late thirties (Terry)

Linda: early 30s, dressed casually in tan-ish fake cargo pants, black t-shirt, black warm-up jacket, sneakers, carrying fabric messenger bag (Teachers College)

Luis, Niko's dad and Alex's partner: mid to late 30s, dressed casually (didn't notice or take notes), thin in a wiry way, very light-skinned and light-colored eyes (could pass for white)

123P

Niko: 2 1/2 years old, very very pale-skinned, blue eyes, blond hair. Talks a little. Wearing bright green print t-shirt and cargo pants. Somewhat solitary, also plays with other children.

120P

Tiffany, mom to Xavier and Zahara: I would guess late 20s, very thin with a tiny belly, dark honey skin, straightened hair tied in a short ponytail and held by a brown rubberband-style headband. Wearing skinny dark jeans, a cream camisole with lace at the top, a green cowl-neck sweater with hood and tie around waist.

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Xavier: maybe 3 or 4 years old, talks understandably and in complete sentences. Slightly darker than mom, curly hair.

Zahara: maybe 1 ½ years old. Breastfeeding, doesn't talk yet. Skin tone about the same as mom's, puffy hair. Dressed in white sweater over pink shirt, black skirt with pink flower, white tights, no shoes. Brown mark on nose.

Alex: white, 30s female. Energetic, very good with kids, teacherly. Wearing a dark green printed t-shirt over black jeans turned up over light beige boots. Black belt. Long brown hair to waist, half of it up in a messy bun/ponytail. Green eyes. Heavy earrings made of polished stones.

121P

122P

Terry: café au lait skin, late 30s, gray in hair and loose skin. Wavy hair. Dressed in a light blue scoop neck sweater short-sleeve top with brown fake cargo pants (a lot like mine), with sneakers and silver earrings.

Pai: about 3-4 years old, very energetic. Very light-skinned, with almost straight hair, could pass for white/Latin/very light-skinned Indian. Wearing a gray printed t-shirt.

123P

Laura: 20s, much lighter-skinned than sister, dark hair in soft curls split down the middle. Wearing a fine gauge purple sweater over a black tank top layered over a white tank top, and jeans. Slightly thick around the waist. She wears wire frame glasses.

124P

125P

Kim: 30s, dark chocolate skin. Curly hair framing face. Wearing an orange t-shirt with a black hair pick topped by a fist, printed with "Beautiful," over jeans and flats. She wears dangling gold earrings instead of a hoop shape, rectangular.

~~126P~~

Amir: thin, small child. Looks as developed as a 3yo or older but much smaller than Pai or Xavier. That is, features are developed, not much baby fat around cheeks. Hair in much smaller curls than mother's. Lighter-skinned than mother. Maybe has Indian father (I didn't catch the name), since Kim talks about Gujarat. Wearing white polo T shirt, and workout pants in navy blue, with white and light blue stripes down the side.

At 120<sup>th</sup> and Manhattan Ave there is a tremendous amount of construction going on, with what looks like two large lots cleaned and dug up, lots of men, and machinery. At 121<sup>st</sup> and Douglass just before a beauty salon that offers "no-lye relaxer," I see a white woman in a red wool coat, cut princess-style, also wearing black slacks, and black flats. She has straight blond hair that hands just past her shoulders. She decides to go into a liquor store at 122<sup>nd</sup> at Douglass, and has to wait for two men to come out before she can go in. The dark-skinned men, dressed in old windbreakers, old t-shirts, and old jeans, take their time walking out of the narrow hallway. There is also a young man in a white shirt, tie, and slacks walking south on Douglass.

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On the way to Haja and Cindy's garden I pass Willie Morgan's garden, which is padlocked. A sign reads that the garden is open 11:30-5:30pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. [I make a mental note to check it when I leave, but I forget.] There is construction still going on just past his lot. I exchange greetings with a man who appears to be a construction worker, then see a giant machine in the sidewalk. I look back at him and ask if I should go around, and he says, "¡Pasa, pasa!" I take a quick peek into the first floor of the building as I pass, and there is one construction worker on that floor amid a lot of debris.

I show up to the garden at 11:14 and nobody is there yet. I remember that Alex told me to call first. I sit on the curb behind a silver SUV shading me from the sun. I call Alex's cell phone. When I get the voicemail I say that I should've called and that I'll wait for a few minutes before leaving. A black man walks by in faded clothing. Behind him is a light-skinned man holding a child and a paper cup with plastic cover and cardboard sleeve, and pushing a stroller. The drink looks like coffee, with light brown liquid coming out of the top. He stops at the garden and I smile. I ask him if he's part of Kitchen Table. We introduce ourselves, and he opens the gate to the garden. His name is Luis, pronounced "Lou-EE."

When I tell him that I met Alex last Thursday, he says, "That's Alex's child. I'm the dad." Oh yeah, I tell him, last week I kept hearing, Niko, Niko! The boy immediately runs into the garden. I laugh and tell Luis that's how I'm going to learn the nooks and crannies of the garden, by following the kids. I tell him I'm a researcher at TC, and he seems to like me saying that we want to look at education outside of schools. He says he didn't have such a great time in school the last 8 years. I put on a jacket to ward off the mosquitoes. When I mention Tom Goodridge and the garden on 121<sup>st</sup> he asks, PS 76? He was just working there today, which is how he could come to the meeting. He doesn't get to come often to the meetings, just when he is in the area, like today. He says ruefully that he usually misses the BBQ. He now sets up tutoring and other programs in schools. I ask if he works all over New York, and he says also in the Bronx. I tell him I should speak with him too. He gives me a card, which I look at. "Luis Lopez," a Hispanic name, but he speaks with some kind of accent that is not quite British. At some point he also mentioned Cindy Worley and I told him I was speaking to her over the weekend. He tells me he used to live at #220 (very close to Cindy and Haja) and that they knew Haja and Cindy from then. I ask where they live now and he said at 145<sup>th</sup> and Amsterdam. He asks where I live and I tell him.

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We are talking at the green metal tables, which is set in the center of the garden across from the shed. It has four metal green chairs around it, a matching set, and a few white plastic chairs to the side. We both set our things down as we chat.

Soon Tiffany comes into the garden with her small boy and baby girl, Xavier and Zahara. Tiffany opens up the shed and goes to start the fire. I help her clean up the grill, asking her what she needs to do. She explains that Haja usually cleans up after they are finished. I take the tinfoil from her as she contemplates the ash. Luis apologizes for not introducing

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Tiffany and me, and she tells him we already met. I ask Tiffany where the trash is, and she shows me a black bin by the front left corner of the shed.

Alex comes in during the hubbub, telling me she was going to call me back if she didn't see me. Alex exclaims at Zahara in Luis' arms, asking if she got marker on her nose, if her brother marked her nose. There is no coal, or not enough coal, so Tiffany decides to go to the corner store. Luis offers money, but he is holding Zahara, so he pulls at the chain holding the wallet towards Tiffany. Tiffany takes the wallet and asks, "What am I doing?" They successfully get her some money, at least \$20. Alex starts Niko and Xavier on a "game": sitting in white plastic chairs, throwing gravel into green pots about 5 or 6 inches in diameter.

Xavier has decided that he wants a bigger pot. Alex asks, a bigger pot? She finds a gigantic one, but this is not the one Xavier has in mind. Luis says that they know everything in the garden as Xavier shows Alex a bigger pot inside the shed. Alex gets it for him, then tells him there's a problem because there's only one. Tiffany is leaving, tells Alex to start cutting the peppers and onions. Alex and I chat while she notices that Niko has a huge mosquito bite on his forehead. She asks Niko if he has any wipes; he does not, and neither does she. She decides to go buy some, then Luis suggests that Tiffany might have some. Alex doesn't go. She asks Luis if he has a long-sleeved shirt for Niko. He gives her a denim jacket, and she thanks him. She puts the jacket on Niko, who has acquired another mosquito bite.

Niko has dug up an earthworm and Alex asks him if he wants to see "Squirmy Wormy." She picks up the worm. Xavier says he is scared, grimacing, pushing away with his hands and stepping back. His curiosity gets the better of him and he comes to look. Alex asks Niko if he wants to hold Squirmy Wormy, and Niko reaches out. Alex tells Niko to hold his hands palm up, together, and Niko complies. She puts the worm onto his right hand and he drops his left. Xavier repeats some kind of "yuck" comment and Alex says he can pet the worm. Xavier reaches out and gingerly touches the worm, which is moving around rapidly. Alex tells them that the worm is looking for dirt, then impersonating the worm, something like, "Where's the dirt? I don't like the light." She tells the boys that worms eat food and poop out earth. She asks the boys if they would like to put Squirmy Wormy in the compost bin where he would be very "happy." She takes them to the back of the shed on the left side, where there are at least two black bins: one upright, and the other round and near the ground. They have dumped the worm in the upright bin, which comes just above the adults' waists. She asks Niko if he wants to see Squirmy Wormy and she holds him up, telling him that he has gone below the peanut shells. Xavier starts asking a series of why questions, and she tells him that worms eat food and poop dirt, that we can't do that, that they eat the food we don't like to eat. He continues asking why questions, and Alex jokes to me, "Why are we?" Good question, I tell her.

Tiffany comes back empty-handed. She loads Zahara onto the stroller, presumably for a longer trip to another store. Luis asks her where she got her knife, and she replies, the Marshall's on 125<sup>th</sup> Street. He tells her it's a good knife, shows her a logo and the name brand [a French brand I can't remember]. As she leaves he says he wishes she got 12,

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since at \$7 it's a steal. "They didn't know what they had," he said, speaking of Marshall's. I say Marshall's can have anything, and he lists some household items. [Was this a "prove-you-shop-at-Marshall's" moment? I didn't think it was until he started listing household items.]

Luis and I talk about mosquitoes. He says that this is a new breed. The new breed, black with a stripe, is resistant to sprays. The old breed, brown and gray, was fought by periodic sprays by the city, especially in "ghetto neighborhoods." He says they spray every 3 years or so from low-flying planes. He tells me that the workers who handled the pesticides sued successfully. I say, but not the residents. He confirms this, saying not the people who have to "huff" it. Luis announces that he's going to start "burning something," having earlier said that the smoke will help drive off mosquitoes. He starts collecting dry materials from another fire pit (that I hadn't seen before), from the ground, and from trees.

At some point Tiffany explains that Zahara fell, that she was walking on asphalt, not running, just walking. At the time it was a drop of blood, now it looks worse, she didn't even notice the scratches until later. Somebody jokes about ACS taking her baby, and Tiffany says in a surprised tone that people are really scared of ACS. Luis calls from the grill that they have good reason. [some class tensions here?] Alex starts telling a story about how "Niko got scratched by a cat, actually it was *our* cat," and the scratch barely stopped at his eye. Somebody at work told her that she'd better be careful or ACS would come and get her child. I tell Terry that a woman started telling me how ACS got her a crib and some other materials, surprised that ACS could actually be helpful.

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At some point (before others arrive) Xavier wants Niko's orange juice. Alex is about to give it to him as Tiffany pulls out a large chilled water bottle. Tiffany tells Xavier that the juice belongs to Niko. Alex tells him he can have a sip. As he drinks Alex tells him just to take one sip so there will be some left for Niko. Tiffany gives Xavier the water bottle, which he doesn't look too happy about. Niko is chugging the orange juice. Alex distracts Xavier from his disappointment by drawing an X onto the sweating water bottle. Why, he asks, and Alex tells him, because your name starts with X. Tiffany talks about how Xavier finds x's everywhere, like in the sidewalk. Alex says that people say nothing starts with X but it's everywhere.

Terry arrives with her daughter, Pai (?). I did not recognize her, and she barely recognized me. Luis has successfully started the fire with twigs and leaves and the mosquitoes have calmed down considerably. He fans the smoke towards the table. Tiffany comes back with a small bag of charcoal, saying that she found it below the kitty litter. When she couldn't find it she told the guy there wasn't any and he asked her what she was doing barbecuing in October. It's 74 degrees, Terry says. Tiffany starts putting pieces of charcoal into the fire. Alex tells her she didn't know where the peppers were. Alex also asks for wipes. She gets them out of Tiffany's bag, laying three on the back of one of the green metal chairs. "You've got a *system*," somebody exclaims. Luis volunteers to change Niko and Alex seems relieved. Luis takes the things over to the front of the garden, where Niko is currently playing. I think Tiffany takes out of her bag

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and places on the table red and green bell peppers, 2 onions, 2 packages of sausage, and 2 baguettes. She tells Alex that she bought sausage, because after the first few summer meetings, she has no more creativity.

Alex starts cutting the green bell peppers on top of some paper plates after some discussion with Tiffany: circles or chunks? Alex says she thinks circles will cook better as she positions Tiffany's knife over the top of the pepper. Tiffany shrugs, says, you can do circles. I was going to put them on skewers. Alex decides chunks. [I see this not-speaking-your-mind as middle-class passive-aggressive "politeness."] She gets Niko and Xavier to help, by asking them to "break" the slices in half. They do so, to occasional cheers from those of us sitting at the table. When Alex moves onto the red bell peppers, Xavier announces that he doesn't like red peppers. Alex explains that other people like red peppers, and that he doesn't have to eat them, but can he help so everyone can eat later? He agrees. Alex asks Terry if Pai has reasonably clean hands. Terry laughs and Alex says, I said reasonably clean, not clean. Alex says they can clean the vegetables later, and somebody (Tiffany?) says they will be put into the fire anyway. Terry and I chat about my project, then the ladies begin talking about a trip they are planning this weekend.

Niko and Xavier get bored of the peppers and run off to play. I move to pick up where they left off and Alex asks if she can give me the peppers to break. Laura, Terry's sister arrives. Everyone is still talking about the trip: trying to figure out who is renting a car and how, if the cars come with rental seats, what time they are leaving. Alex says that her parents want to chip in with the rental. I ask where they are going and somebody tells me the Berkshires. [I should have asked; I've only heard of the name and have very little associations with it.] Tiffany says Chester is not a "tired driver," meaning that he doesn't drive well when tired. Tiffany wants to leave on Saturday instead of Friday, since Chester won't get off work until the afternoon and the soonest people could leave is 4pm. Terry says you don't want to leave on a Friday at 4pm.

After cutting an onion, Alex starts threading the pieces onto the skewers. Luis joins her, and after I finish breaking up the green bell pepper I do as well, checking to see how far they've spaced the vegetables. I copy Alex, alternating pieces, doubling on the onion. People chat: I ask Laura if she has any kids, knowing the answer. People ask Laura if she is going on the trip, and she says no.

We finish with the skewers. Alex tells everyone that her parents feel bad for taking the car [presumably they would have lent Alex the car], so they are willing to help out with the rental. In a conversation about the difficulty of renting cars, somebody says everyone will be going up that weekend to see the leaves. Somebody else says that any weekend is difficult to rent cars in the city. Kim arrives with her son Amir in the middle of this conversation. Kim tries to tell the group that there is now a Harlem Hertz. The group is not listening, so she tells Tiffany in an aside that there is a Harlem Hertz in East Harlem. Terry explains to me, "Our parents have some property up there." Tiffany remarks on the "our," saying that she didn't see Laura there. [The implication is, who has parents with property in the Berkshires? Perhaps some class tension within this relatively well-off

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group?] At some point Kim introduces herself to me and I very briefly explain what I am doing there.

[Also, there are several moments where somebody turns to me explicitly to explain something that everybody else already understands, or in Alex's case, to ask me if I "want to know anything." I tell her I'm getting my questions answered, gesturing to a conversation in progress. I'm not sure when Luis left, but as predicted, he had to leave before the food was finished.]

Tiffany starts telling a story as she breastfeeds Zahara. "Guess who sat next to me in a bar?" Someone asks her in a teasing tone if she was in a bar, and she concedes, "Bar, lounge, restaurant." She repeats her question, and Kim bites. "Jay-Z and Puff Daddy!" she crows. Somebody asks her where, and she replies, Tillman's, a soul food place in Chelsea. She then casts aspersions on its status as a soul food restaurant, saying that they make grilled cheese sandwiches with expensive cheeses like Gruyere, and that's not what her people eat. [A web search reveals that it is rated as expensive, \$\$\$\$. The few food items range from \$8-14, \$8 for a salad of hearts of palm and \$14 for a Brie and Spiced Pear Grilled Cheese sandwich.] Kim joked about being/not being "in the know," when Tiffany replied to someone's question that the place was relatively new.

Kim asks, "So who's going up besides your three families?" In addition to Terry, Tiffany, and Alex's families, somebody replies that Tanya and Tammy are going as well.

Alex says something about buying \$200 worth of posters through Syracuse Cultural Something-or-other website, some of them very political. [A web search turns up "Syracuse Cultural Workers," not sure if this is where she got them: [http://syracuseculturalworkers.com/taxonomy/term/66/posters\\_loose\\_and\\_framed](http://syracuseculturalworkers.com/taxonomy/term/66/posters_loose_and_framed). It has posters like, "Unfortunately History Has Set the Record a Little Too Straight," with pictures of James Baldwin and others; "Alternative Alphabet for Big and Little People" where A stands for Africa, B for Bicycle, C for Compost, and so on; and a photo and quote from Audre Lorde.] She put the posters up at her job. Kim asks Alex where she works, and she says "High School for Media Studies," Kim asks, "Is that near La Guardia?" Alex explains that it is now called the King Complex. There are 6 schools in one building. Everyone's fighting for space, so her school took the changing room, where janitors have their lockers, so there's not much to look at. She put up the posters. Somebody asks if there are windows, and she said the school is in the basement, so there are no windows.

She tells a story about getting her kids interested in the darkroom. She makes it sound like a darkroom is a real throwback, I assume in the age of digital photography. Once one student got very excited about it, the others got into the idea of using the darkroom.

Kim says, and you also teach at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Y. Alex confirms this: she teaches science after school to fourth-graders, so, she smiles, she doesn't need to know all that much. Their science teacher left with her husband to go study bats (?) in Chile, where she's from, so the Y was left without a science teacher. Alex complains that she hasn't gotten paid from



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either job yet. Tiffany talks about an internship for 14-19 year old in media studies. Nobody but me seems to be listening, they are paying attention to their kids. She repeats herself, saying that the internship is designed to break down the prison industrial complex.

Tiffany asks Laura if she is working; she is, with a catering company. She says she scheduled as many dates as she could. Then the topic turns to vegetarianism and veganism, started by Alex and Kim. Kim is telling Alex that in Gujarati (sic) they are vegetarian except for goat's milk, since the cow is sacred. Alex then asks the whole group if there is any community that is vegan. I say that'd be hard, since we need a B vitamin from animal sources. Somebody says you can get it from oil. [I don't think this is true—this is the only nutrient that is not found in anything but animal protein, but milk counts.] Alex repeats Kim's assertion that in Gujarati they don't have anything but goat's milk. I ask about ghee, and somebody else (Tiffany I think) says milk. Somebody asks what ghee is and Terry says clarified butter, and emphatically states that Indians have milk and butter.

Alex says that a few vegetarians stayed with them for a few days and cooked for them. She complained about her body not feeling right, and Terry or Laura agrees that vegetarianism requires a whole nother digestive system. Alex says, so much hummus, so much soy.

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Tiffany then talks about assumptions restaurant people make when she goes to meet friends. At Tillman's she had just called her friends, who said they were already eating. When she arrived she told the host that her friends were there, and he tried to block her. She kept walking, and was surprised when she found her friends. "I can eat with Indian people too," she told the group. Somebody made a comment that I can no longer remember, that made me think the conversation would turn to a discussion of casual racism. Instead people joked about the host, who treated Tiffany as if she would find out she was wrong. Terry joked, he was letting you find out! Somebody asked about the people in Tillman's, and Tiffany said that her friends were the craziest group there—they asked to be seated near Jay-Z and Puff Daddy. They were seated in the next booth. That was bad, though, because her friend sat at the very edge of the booth and would go, "He ordered another dirty martini," "He put his arm around the girl next to him." She said that someone else had seen Q-tip there too. She said the place was unassuming. [It seemed that Tiffany wanted to complete her story, since this was second time that this came up. It worked on me—first I was envious, then I wondered how often young moms get to go out and how much they miss it, as evidenced by my own friends' experiences.]

At some point the food is done. Alex had set the sausages and some of the vegetable skewers on the grill; Tiffany finished it. They also handed off the responsibility of watching the food—Alex started it, and took the kids to see. Later, Tiffany turned the food over with one hand, holding Zahara. When it was finished Alex set the food into a foil tin she found in the shed. Alex dished out the food onto the small paper plates: a sausage and the vegetables from one skewer. The kids sit with their moms at the table.



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Tiffany mentions Citerella in the context of asking where she got the food, but she had replied that she got the peppers “in a grocery store.”

Alex starts a new topic of conversation: “So I’m super excited about the spaces for the winter.” Kim asks, and Tiffany explains that it just came together on Thursday. “We went to TRUCE, where she used to work,” gesturing to Tiffany. As I take notes Laura leans in and asks me what I’m working on. I explain to her briefly the project and explain that this is what I’m interested in: how do they get resources, such as space. [The “subjects” noticing me, taking care of one another]

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As the adults talk, Xavier has taken a rubber ball and thrown it deep into the garden, that is, away from the path. He tries to get someone to get the ball from him. Niko is breastfeeding with Alex, and Pai is distractedly looking at the cover of a book. Eventually Xavier gets Pai to come with him. She looks as he points into the brush. He eventually climbs in and retrieves the ball.

Alex announces, “Can we talk about night reading again?” [I don’t know what this is and don’t ask.] There is a short discussion.

Tiffany asks Alex for a carrier, for a guest that is staying with her. She starts speaking about a woman she met on the street who recognized her from her website. She corrects herself and says the woman recognized Xavier. (I’m not sure what the connection is with the guest who needs a baby carrier.) Tiffany expresses surprise that Xavier is recognizable on the street from baby pictures. She also explains to me that she sells slings online. Alex tells her that Xavier that Xavier looks the same, same eyes, a little more hair, a little taller.

Tiffany then talks about a nonprofit organization that she’s tried to volunteer for in the past, who also contacted her for help with slings. The organization is called Sistās on the Rise. [The organization “is a space for young women of color ages 13-21, to take ownership and power over their lives and create a healthy community. We acknowledge that young women of color need a safe space to develop their leadership skills, socio-political analysis and organize without being marginalized. We realize that many young women who became pregnant drop-out of existing youth programs because they do not receive the support necessary for their continued participation,” <http://www.sistasontherise.org>.]

Tiffany says, “I don’t understand,” why Sharim won’t call her back. Alex suggests that she’s young, and Tiffany says, Sharim’s not young! Terry echoes her. Tiffany complains, “It’s been like over a week!” [This doesn’t feel long to me to return a phone call, even if they solicited her help.] Then Terry starts joking, “Next thing she’ll look for a Penn State grad.” Encouraged, she says, “with 2 kids who lives in East Harlem.”

Tiffany then throws out two ideas for nonprofits. “OK I got 2 nonprofits.” She proposes a café, Café Apple Tree. Alex says she thinks that name is taken. Tiffany says she made it up. She then says she wants to start a home for teen moms interested in natural parenting, a brownstone for four or five moms where they can stay until their kids are, like, five.

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Somebody comments that her second idea seems a lot more developed than her first, and she says that sometimes when you've talked about something too much you don't have a lot to say anymore.

In this relatively quiet time, as the adults talk and the kids run off to play, and Niko breast feeds, I take the opportunity to record what people are wearing. At some point we talk again about what I do, and Alex says she will be interested in hearing what they do. Alex or Tiffany asks me what my days look like when I'm not on the garden. I tell them I went to the Coalition meeting last night, and they ask, what coalition? I tell them I'm talking to a health educator and somebody whose brother runs a Beacon center. Alex gets up to put away the rest of the vegetable skewers.

Terry says she is looking for outlet stores, gesturing with her phone, but she can't find any. [I think this is the talk over Zahara's shoes. Tiffany has not been able to find shoes for Zahara after going to several stores in the area, so she's been shoeless for the past 2 weeks. She says something about shoes being too hard, and others make sympathetic noises. Today, when she wants to walk, she walks around in her white stockings. They are going to Old Navy today to look for shoes, and Tiffany is resigning herself to buying whatever they sell there.]

There is talk about the various trips people are planning and already went on this summer: Terry went to Alaska, and somebody went to Detroit. Terry talks about the kids getting real tired, with no daylight they'd play on and on and just fall asleep where they were. Somebody asks Terry if she went over the summer, and she jokes that nobody would go over the winter.

People start to pack up, probably around 2pm. It's Terry's turn to bring food next time, and I ask her if I can bring anything. She tells me no, and Alex explains that it's just easier just to have one person plan than to coordinate. I say ok. Then people start eating cinnamon raisin muffins that Tiffany brought. There is one chocolate muffin that Xavier is eating, and Kim asks if it has nuts. Tiffany says she was careful of that, so she bought mostly cinnamon raisin muffins. Alex asks for some and eats the rest of the muffin that Terry began.

Laura starts collecting trash. The moms pack up and coax the kids out. Alex says that the kids always find a way to play together once they are ready to leave, as Niko runs around with Xavier. Alex says that Niko's figured out that he wants to be chased. As people pack up, Alex tells me she knows what I should bring, that I should bring healthy snacks like apples. I say I forgot to bring them out. As Terry is almost leaving Kim says something like, so for once I'm not the first to leave.

Tiffany is still breast feeding Zahara, so Alex and I hang out and finish cleaning up. She tells Zahara that if she fed all at once, instead of getting distracted, they could go. [Zahara briefly breastfed around 3 times already.] Zahara finishes, and Tiffany reports that she can feel everyone leaving.

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As we leave Tiffany talks about wanting to tell people that they've just come from a garden. [I assume that she thinks people give them strange looks if there are leaves and other organic matter hanging from their clothing and hair?]

On the walk to the corner I ask Alex, did you know each other already or did you find each other

Tiffany begins explaining that she and Terry met on the street

They live on the same block

Terry asked about Tiffany's sling

Alex breaks in to say that Terry was happy to meet another mom on her block

Tiffany confirms this and says the sling was the excuse to talk

We can't take the strollers around the machine in the sidewalk, so we back up and cross the street.

Alex met Kim at the library

Alex grew up on the Upper West Side, Kim also grew up in NYC (UWS?)

They immediately recognized each other as New Yorkers [others in group?]

Tiffany actually met Alex through a friend of Alex's

Tiffany had posted on a homeschooling listserv and Alex's friend responded

Alex's friend was from Brooklyn

Tiffany says something about how her friends think she is a crunchy hippie

The crunchiest, hippie-est person

Alex says, "Well then they shouldn't come to my house." She says she is the bougie-est of her friends, especially her friends from Maine

As we get to the corner of 122<sup>nd</sup> and Douglass, Tiffany then offers to give me her email She then decides to give me the website for the group

I say wow, you guys are so organized

She says Terry had decided she wanted something like this, secured the domain name

Then went about creating the reality

Tiffany gives me her email address and the website for the group:

[tiffanykapri@gmail.com](mailto:tiffanykapri@gmail.com)

[www.kitchentablenyc.org](http://www.kitchentablenyc.org)