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“Scribble Scrabble”: Migration, Young Parenting Latinas, and Digital Storytelling as Narrative Shock

The nexus of migration and family offers a conjuncture to enrich understanding of teen pregnancy and parenting. This article draws findings from a project centered on participant-produced new media to reveal how young mothers negotiate reproductive health disparities. We focus on young mothers' experiences of migration and movement, captured in local vernacular through participants' digital story depictions and follow-up interviews. We argue that disparities link up with the single story of teen mothering, involve public shaming, continue hand-in-hand with institutional humiliation, and are exacerbated through migration and movement. To disrupt the normative notions that shadow young mothers, we take seriously the young women's narratives. We theorize how the richness of stories and storytelling may serve as a potent intervention—a narrative shock—for articulating meanings and cultivating dignity for young mothers and their families, especially those who do not fit the sedentary and age biases of parenting ideals. [digital storytelling, teen parenting, reproductive health, migration]

Introduction

The nexus of migration and family offers a dynamic conjuncture around which to cultivate an appreciation of teen pregnancy and parenting as it is lived and realized by young mothers. In this article, we draw findings from a project centered on producing digital stories to reveal how diasporic youth who are also young mothers experience and negotiate reproductive health disparities. The project, “Hear Our Stories,” prioritizes uprooted young parenting Latinas whose material conditions and cultural worlds have placed them in tenuous positions, both socially constructed and experientially embodied. We argue that disparities in numerous ways link up with the single story of teen mothering, involve public shaming, and continue hand-in-hand with institutional humiliation. To disrupt the dominant and harmful normative

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notions that assemble around and continually shadow young adults-turned-mothers, we develop the concept of “narrative shock” to take seriously the potential of stories and narratives produced consciously and collaboratively to disturb deeply moored notions of common sense about contemporary parenting. We examine participant-produced stories alongside interviews. Our concept of narrative shock is intended as an intervention to unhinge the violent stigma that attaches to young parents. Digital stories are shocking because they move beyond text—they shock at visceral, affective, and sensory levels. They synergize the spoken with the visual, which creates a different kind of voice to link the storyteller and interlocutor. We theorize how recognizing the richness of digital stories and digital storytelling may be a potent strategy for articulating meanings and cultivating dignity for young mothers and their families, especially those who do not fit the sedentary and age biases of contemporary U.S. parenting ideals.

Participant narratives shed light on one significant experience that remains invisible in standard teen pregnancy prevention messaging—an intense level of movement. Therefore, we connect aspects of reproductive health to young women’s lived experiences, especially in relation to family, migration, and movement across generations. As such, this article contributes to literature that considers conditions under which young people move (Roseman 2013). We argue that a sedentary bias saturates the literature, social services, and discourses on parenting.

A number of scholars have pointed to sedentary orientations that pervade mainstream political culture. In writing about refugees, exile, and displacement, Liisa Malkki used the term “sedentarist metaphysics” (1992, 31) to describe a tendency in the modern world to root particular identities in national territories. Such rooting manifests in a moral ecology: “In the national order of things, the rooting of peoples is not only normal; it is also perceived as a moral and spiritual need” (Malkki 1992, 30). In the decades since Malkki first published her influential insights, a literature on the politics of mobility has matured. Tim Creswell reiterates that place, home, and roots are “profoundly moral concepts in the humanist lexicon” (Creswell 2002, 14). Homeplace and a permanent address are more than locators. They are markers of status. Without a home, one becomes homeless, a state of suspended and constant mobility. Other categories of perpetually mobile people similarly are marked, for example, as exiles, refugees, migrants, nomads, or precariats. A sedentarist bias continues to shoot through moral personhood even in highly mobile societies (Krause and Bressan 2018; Leinaweaver 2008).

In developing a “new mobilities paradigm,” Creswell draws attention to how movement figures into the popular imagination. He draws attention to the politics of representation along negative and positive ends of a spectrum (Creswell 2010). On the one hand, mobility implies something as “dysfunctional, inauthentic and rootless.” Links between immigrant mobility and threat are reflected in journalists’ and politicians’ incessant use of metaphors such as “flooding and swamping.” On the other hand, mobility is glossed as “liberating, antifoundational and transgressive.” The right to mobility is commonly portrayed as fundamental to Western citizenship and deeply codified in policies, laws, and procedures (Creswell 2010, 19–20).

These tensions inform the profound purpose at the core of constructing a politics of mobility. Historical constellations of mobility give rise to a central

question: “How is mobility embodied?” (Creswell 2010, 21). To answer the question, Creswell’s approach privileges three connected aspects: the fact of physical movement, the representations of movement and how meanings as well as values are attached to those representations, and the ways in which movement is embodied and experienced through practices. The trilogy to this framework, then, is movement, representation, and practice. Furthermore, as Wanning Sun points out, mobility is a deeply stratified process (Sun 2010), and it is acutely so among young parenting Latinas.

We turn our attention to Holyoke, Massachusetts, which hosts a population known for its island migrations, initially Ireland and later Puerto Rico. With the 1917 Jones Act, Puerto Ricans became U.S. citizens after the U.S. assumed control over Puerto Rico in 1898. In the post–World War II era, “Operation Bootstrap” was instituted in collaboration with the U.S. government to relieve the unemployment problem on the island, while also providing tax exemptions to U.S. companies desiring to invest in its economic development. Family-making practices became tightly coiled with economic development (Briggs 2002; Flores 2017), and the sterilization of Puerto Rican women on both the island and mainland became linked to a modernization ideology that blamed overpopulation for a lack of progress (Lopez 2008). The confounding impacts on the lives of Puerto Ricans resulting from imperial forms of modernization were thickly described in Sidney Mintz’s (1974) *Worker in the Cane*. The anthropologist’s life history of an ordinary, working-class, Puerto Rican man achieved his goal to illuminate the “immense human potential, often unrealized, because our social and economic system destroys individual capacities before they can blossom” (Mintz 1974, xii). Mintz conducted fieldwork in Puerto Rico beginning in 1948. In the decades that followed, Puerto Rican migration to the U.S. mainland was encouraged (Black 2010).

In the 1950s, when significant numbers of Puerto Ricans first arrived in Holyoke, the city was already in the throes of post-industrialization as a former paper mill boomtown. Several events prompted Puerto Rican migration from the island to Holyoke. One was an economic recession on the island, leading Puerto Ricans to migrate to western Massachusetts to work in the shade tobacco industry. With the assistance of the U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. companies connected with the Department of Labor in Puerto Rico to establish an agreement to send Puerto Rican farmers to Holyoke to work on tobacco farms (Lopez 2008). In many ways, the way teen parents are blamed today echoes the culture of poverty thesis of the 1960s and 1970s. As Lopez so clearly argues, “the culture of poverty thesis pathologized the poor and blamed their culture and family organization for their poverty” (2008, 30). Today, many Puerto Ricans in Holyoke live in substandard housing, have little access to good jobs and/or work in very low-wage jobs, and experience institutional and everyday forms of racism. History is repeating itself in a particularly striking and similar way among the current generation of young mothers.

The Stubborn Single Story of Teen Parenting

Dominant norms related to family forms are rooted in time and place. In the United States, the nuclear family has prevailed as the most normative form. In many cultural contexts, by contrast, the extended family has been the preferred form. Recourse to

historical demography may serve as a useful elixir for the alchemy needed to upend the stubborn single story from its mooring. A remarkable heterogeneity of circumstances, for example, is manifested in what has come to pass in much of the world: small families of two or three children. The number of children that women have, on average, declined historically under various circumstances of health, development, maternal mortality, and the like (Coale and Watkins 1986; Schneider and Schneider 1996). The demographic transition to low fertility in Europe and the United States largely preceded family planning as a field, which evolved in tandem with positivist modernization agendas (Greenhalgh 1995). Its enduring quality has largely been possible due to a “conceit of rationality,” in other words, an assumption of so-called rational family planning (Krause 2012).

To avoid the rationalist hubris of the family planning model, we use the term “family making” to signal the values, discourses, and practices that inform the ways in which individuals, institutions, and the state create, sustain, or undermine families. Family making is akin to reproduction. Anthropologists and demographers working on health and gender have for some time turned their attention to the ways that reproduction “follows lines of social inequality” (Riley 2018, 117). Indeed, stratified reproduction is relevant here, referring to “the hierarchical organization of reproductive health, fecundity, birth experiences and child rearing that supports and rewards the maternity of some women, while despising or outlawing the mother-work of others” (Rapp 2001, 469). To grasp why teen parenting has been such a stubborn and fraught story requires that we place it in the context of dominant ideologies related to families and the resources that are often at stake.

Just as demographic transition witnessed numerous and at times coercive policy formulations in different national and political contexts, surveillance of potentially fertile bodies continues. Morgan and Roberts usefully reframe Foucault’s biopolitics as “reproductive governance” and as such draw attention to deeply embodied moral regimes that persist in a broad range of contexts (Krause and De Zordo 2012; Morgan and Roberts 2012).

Numerous scholars interested in women’s health have underscored the ways in which ideologies and structures converge around this topic (Chavez 2004; Geronimus 2003; Luker 1996; Marchesi 2012; Wilson and Huntington 2006). Barcelos documents a “persistent discourse of teen pregnancy as pathology” (Barcelos 2014, 476). Assumptions about reproductive patterns have shifted from a desire to tell a universal story with a single provable hypothesis to a recognition that there are multiple stories, such as with demographic changes to low fertility. Such recognition has not yet found its way to the context of reproduction that occurs on the young end of human childbearing capacity. The commonsense view of family making in the United States is that teenagers make dangerous parents. In effect, unabashed ideological fervor on this topic circulates without apology. Teen parenting is portrayed as a single and uncontestable story.

In her talk on “The danger of a single story,” the Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie positions herself as a child from a middle-class home and remembers her mother’s habit of talking about their houseboy as poor. Adichie describes a memory of traveling to this boy’s village, where his own mother showed her a beautiful patterned basket that his brother had made from raffia. The narrative

shocked her. “It had not occurred to me that anybody in his family could actually make something,” Adichie recalls. “All I had heard about them [was] how poor that they were, so it had become impossible for me to see them as anything but poor. Poverty was my single story of them.” That experience inspired a powerful lesson for Adichie: the danger of a single story (Adichie 2009).

We draw a similar lesson from our work with teen mothers. Their stories are always already understood as a single story, as one of pity and of dead ends: a doomed future that they ultimately deserve because they made the bad choice to have sex, to get pregnant, and to keep the baby. Shame campaigns visibly help reinforce that single narrative (i.e., that the teen mother’s life is over before it has even begun). The shaming extends the message to the future lives of their children. Prevention campaigns claim to be well intended as they seek to raise public awareness. The United Way of Milwaukee’s 2015 campaign visually depicts teen parents of color as pull-toys and puppets who are dragged around by their children, with little chance of a future (Gubrium and Krause 2015). Such strategies amount to bullying tactics, which exacerbate rather than reduce or acknowledge social inequality.

Narrative Shock and Multisensory Methods

Traversing methodological borders, multisensory approaches encourage us to trespass on single stories and to imagine new, potentially strange, ways of seeing, engaging with, and acting upon social inequalities that impinge upon them. A “sensuous awakening” (Stoller 1997, xii) recognizes the deep significance of sensations in research and practice and requires different modes of representation. Attention to the senses animates sensory ethnography (Pink 2015), phenomenological anthropology (Howes 2006), and public ethnography (Vannini et al. 2014). The senses are fundamental to collaborative and engaged meaning making, practice, and action as they transform the unfamiliar into personal, sensitized understandings (Degarrod 2013). By engaging multiple senses, we consider an “everyday ethics” (Das 2015) built on the capability of our interlocutors to inspire and inform as well as produce valued knowledge on their lives. We argue that en-sensed understandings produce a narrative shock—upending common sense understandings that dominate health—with the goal to shift public conversations and produce more sensitive intervention and policy. Multisensory methods like digital storytelling turn static knowledge into visceral objects—digital stories—that become forms of data collection as well as transformative products to address social inequality (Gubrium and Harper 2013).

Our concept of narrative shock is situated alongside recognition of the status of teen mothers as subaltern. In other words, their lived experiences exist in a world of exacerbated inequality. As Kate Crehan, drawing on the insights of Antonio Gramsci, makes clear of subaltern subjects, “they inhabit a world in which the major conceptual structures available to them are inextricably bound up with the hegemonic narratives of the dominant classes” (Crehan 2016, 60). Given teen mothers’ status in contemporary U.S. society, we turn to the important question of “how subaltern narratives are transformed into effective challenges to an existing hegemony” (Crehan 2016, 60; Gramsci 1971). Crehan nurtures a focus on narratives of inequality to bring forward Gramsci’s notion of common sense. Our concept of narrative shock positions us as collaborators in asking how subaltern narratives

might be transformed to challenge the existing hegemony related to family-making norms.

Our intervention constitutes a sort of narrative shock because participants' digital stories speak the unspeakable. Their stories speak against a self-evident truth that circulates in relation to teen pregnancy and parenting. Standing up for teen mothers can often be misconstrued as promoting teens to get pregnant and have babies, as opposing contraception and abortion, or as supporting a prolife stance. Against the backdrop of a polarized prochoice/prolife binary, we seek to carve out a third-way strategy: to humanize teen mothers and dismantle a bar from the prison of inequality. In other words, we strive to promote a reproductive justice stance that puts the needs of young families front and center (Ross and Solinger 2017). Our research exposes how shame dehumanizes teens. Such campaigns render cold their experienced structural vulnerabilities. While participant interviews capture the cost of shame, their digital stories electrify what is silenced and merely felt, making possible attuned responses for action.

Digital Storytelling as a Multisensory Tool

Digital storytelling is a multisensory tool for realizing narrative shock. The genre involves a collaborative, workshop-based process that affords participants the opportunity to express their own meanings and experiences. Digital stories are short, first-person visual narratives that synthesize digital image, audio recording, music, and text to document personal experiences. Together with participants, we analyzed the problem-oriented and stigmatizing discourses of young motherhood, especially as they relate to structural violence, notions of fit parenting, and youth-directed reproductive and sexual politics. Between August and October 2013, we conducted four, four-day digital storytelling workshops at a General Education Diploma (GED) prep site in Holyoke, Massachusetts, that we call "The Center," where we recruited 31 parenting young women to participate. All produced digital stories. The workshops lay a foundation for other research activities such as interviews and body mapping, as well as for training in reproductive justice organizing and advocacy, which resulted in community forums.

We conceptualized the digital storytelling workshop as a setting for the collection of potentially transformative narrative data, to see how such a setting might provide a framework for "multi-sensorial sense making" (Sharf et al. 2011, 45) and also create a context that stimulated participants to produce digital stories centering on their felt sense of having come into sexuality, motherhood, and emerging adulthood. To focus in on the multisensory aspects, we used an intertextual transcription method to conduct thematic analysis of the digital stories (Gubrium et al. 2014).

Digital stories were crafted within the structure of a workshop that featured talking and writing prompts, individual and group script work, a story circle, script editing, voiceover recording of scripts, storyboarding, image selection, digital editing, and assembling. All of this was done with guidance from trained facilitators. We used story prompts to encourage participants to write about a time when they learned about sex and desire, understood what love is all about, felt like a good mom or a bad mom, realized what home means, felt really strong or really helpless, or felt like they were (or were not) part of a family. The prompts served as a visceral

guiding point for storytellers who may have otherwise struggled to pinpoint a topic for their stories. During the workshop, members of the research team alternated between typing field notes and assisting participants with editing their stories, selecting images, or using computer software.

In addition, participants received feedback each step of the way—from peers during group work and from workshop facilitators in one-on-one contexts. Their stories evolved as they worked with feedback. The process was iterative. It involved co-production in the sense that participants drew on others' responses to their written, visual, and spoken representations of their experiences while gaining new skills in media literacy. Proceeding through the digital storytelling workshop process, and especially during the story circle, when participants shared their stories for the first time with the whole group (some for the first time with anyone), the storytellers were able to choose what to share and not to share, to string together fragments of ideas, and to consider which parts of their story might leave the circle and enter the public domain (Hancox 2012, 70). The workshops also provided a space to build solidarity among the participants and between them and the other team of researchers, students, and facilitators.

In addition to the digital storytelling workshops, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 28 of the 31 Hear Our Stories project participants. The interviews provide context to the digital stories. With our team of five research assistants, we transcribed digital stories and interviews, identified themes, developed a codebook, and coded digital stories and interviews. The process of developing the codebook itself was deeply analytical (Bernard and Ryan 2010).

Migration, Movement, and a Quest for Quiet

This article draws on the code related to Movement, which included three sub-codes: Migration, Escape (La Fuga), and Transience (Appendix 1). The process of developing the codebook involved numerous sessions of brainstorming among team members as we collectively engaged with interview material, field notes, and digital stories. For the purpose of coding, we defined Migration as “forced or voluntary movement between geographic locations.” We considered different levels of migration, including external (between Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland), internal (within the U.S. mainland, mostly in the Northeast), and intra (within Massachusetts). We defined Escape as “Talk about escaping bad situations, people, and places. A general notion of coming and going that is normalized. Running away from a situation toward one that is ostensibly better.” Finally, we defined Transience as “Talk of ‘rootlessness,’ wandering, or aimless movement; a lack of spatial and temporal stability.” The codebook excerpt in the online appendix aims to convey the systematic approach that informed the development of a codebook with thematic codes (Bernard and Ryan 2010, 98).

We offer two key findings in relation to the overarching theme of movement that brings narrative shock into relief. The first reflects a type of diasporic existence characterized by exhaustive movement between Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland, as well as within the Northeast and sometimes in Florida. The second relates to a quest for quiet; participants expressed a desire for safe places where they feel loved

and supported. Strong social networks were evident with the caveat that everyone appeared to be on the move.

Movement as Scribble Scrabble

The title of this article is taken from one of our participant's responses during her interview to draw the social map of her life. Our interviews began with a sociogram: We asked each participant to draw a picture of her social relationships. We used several prompts: Who are the meaningful people in your life? How are they meaningful? Who has had most influence on you as a mom and how? We then moved on to a question about the participant's home life and the different places she had lived since being born. We asked each participant to describe what their home was like and what memories they have of home. And we asked each woman to describe where they lived at the time of the interview and whether it felt like home.

As they drew their sociograms, participants described movement across a spectrum: from being homeless, to living in shelters, apartments, and houses. This is not, however, a linear trajectory. A similar wide spectrum exists for how they grew up, from being in foster care, to living with their birth family, the child's father (a.k.a. baby daddy), or one of their relatives, whether mother, father, sibling, cousin, aunt, stepfather, or grandparents. It was common for participants to become confused about their past residences and movement from one situation to another. Memories were muddled. Keeping track of places they had lived was difficult. Murky recollections also characterized their childhoods.

Katia: "I lived in so many houses."

Nicole: "I hopped from house to house."

Paola: "We were just moving all over the place."

Rose: "I just went from place to place. . . . It was like a back-and-forth, back-and-forth thing."

There is clearly something fragile in these characterizations. The narratives are unmoored. There is nothing nostalgic or concrete about the characterizations of this mobile lifestyle. The fragility conveys a sense of a world undone, an ecology whose relations between the parts are unstable and uncertain.

One of the most vivid responses came during an interview with Gabriela, a single mother who had two daughters aged three and one. Gabriela dropped out of school her freshman year of high school, actually twice. "I was just like skipping every day . . . smokin' doing the bad stuff." That's when she met her baby's father. She became pregnant for the first time at 18, well after dropping out. She describes her children as very important to her. Other family members played a less central role in her life. Her own father was in jail and left the family when Gabriela was very young. At the time of the interview her mother lived in Springfield and she took her daughters to visit her each weekend, but she said they were not close. Their relationship was damaged when Gabriela and her mother got into a huge fight and her mother called the police when Gabriela was about seven months pregnant. "She called the cops and I did-, they were like: 'If you don't leave the property we're

gonna lock you up' and I was like, 'What? I'm pregnant.'" Authorities removed Gabriela from the property. Gabriela noted that her mother had drug and alcohol problems. At some point when she was growing up, one of her cousins stepped in and took on a mother role. She had since lost contact with that cousin. She spoke of one brother and four sisters yet highlighted thin relationships and lots of moving around.

The experience of moving around was captured in her interview. Gabriela was born in Puerto Rico and moved to Ohio when she was one. She described having moved back to Puerto Rico when she was eight, stayed there for a year and then moved to Springfield at age nine. She moved to Worcester at age 10, then back to Springfield at age 14, and had since moved a lot within Springfield. For a while, she lived in a shelter, a situation that she narrated as the result of having been kicked out from her daughter's father's place, then from her mother's place, and finally from her cousin's place. She was living in an apartment at the time of the interview but was having some issues with government assistance.

Interviewer:/So/ you lived in so many towns

Gabriela: A lot

Interviewer: Do you feel like you could make a map? Of all the /places/

Gabriela: [exhales]

Interviewer: you've lived?

Gabriela: Yeah

Interviewer: [Chuckles]

Gabriela: Like it would be like . . . all this scribble scrabble everywhere
[tapping pen on paper]

Gabriela's use of the term "scribble scrabble" metaphorically captures the kind of movement that characterizes so many of the young women's lives. To scribble means to "write something hastily or hurriedly without regard to legibility or form." Similarly, as a noun, a scribble is something written quickly or carelessly. Scrabble refers to searching, clawing, or groping about clumsily or frantically. It can also refer "to struggle by or as if by scraping or scratching" as well as "scrabble for survival" (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/scribble>). The reference to her life as scribble scrabble captures a life lived hastily in such a way that the journey is barely legible to outsiders. There is a sense of groping through one's life, and a sense that all of this movement mounts up to just barely surviving. Gabriela's sociogram (Figure 1) is covered with hashtags and tic-tac-toe templates, several of which have the "Xs" and "Os" of finished games.

The drawing of another participant, Marie, also well signifies unrelenting movement. As she talked about homeplace and movement, she doodled an image (Figure 2) that reflected the many moves she has made over her life. The curves suggest a path that one might create as part of their life's journey. In Marie's visual representation, each curve shifts direction as though a switchback on a steep mountain trail. At each curve, she drew a perpendicular line, suggesting something blocked the flow of her journey, perhaps a combination of social, emotional, or physical barriers. Domestic violence followed trajectories of both her mother and

Figure 1. Gabriela's Sociogram. [This figure appears in color in the online issue]

herself. Given that this line also appears at the beginning and end of the design, all of the moves convey changes in direction akin to starting over.

As much as family or extended kin may provide a safety net, it is also one with huge holes. The forces of inequality tear at the seams of a tight-knit family and the "mutuality of being" that leads people to experience one another as kin

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Figure 2. Marie's Sociogram.

(Krause 2018; Sahlins 2013). Whether speaking about global finance corporations (Ho 2009) or impoverished youth on the move (Roseman 2013), we are reminded time and again that kinship is hardly “a spent force in the contemporary world” (McKinnon and Cannell 2013, 36). Instead, kinship becomes deeply entangled with the hegemony of global supply chains, with the morphing conditions of capitalism, with the uncertain and insecure production of surplus populations, as well as with the often-unrecognized conditions of non-capitalism (Gibson-Graham 2006; Tsing 2015). People on the move create, sustain, break, and re-create kin networks across political territories and geographical spaces. Young mothers on the move experience forced or voluntary movement between geographic locations that vary in terms of distance and kind.

Immaterial Migration and the Quest for Quiet

The second finding relates to what we call *immaterial migration*. It is “immaterial” in the sense that the narratives speak of moves that reveal a profound sense of bootstrapping along with an equally weighty absence of success stories related to employment. Rarely did we hear of young women moving for work (e.g., old-style migrations linked to picking tobacco, sewing clothes, working in a poultry-processing plant, or the like). The immateriality of migration emerged as a strong pattern. It contrasted with the kind of intertwined relationships between capitalism, migration, and value creation typical of scholars who study mobility (Lem and Barber 2013). At the same time, strikingly present was a vague promise of opportunity entangled with a concrete desire for a better life. Time and again, the young women expressed a search for improving their life circumstances, one that involved a quest for quiet—away from the noise of drugs, gangs, violence, surveillance, and conflict.

Gabriela: I would get away far. . . . Like somewhere quiet, like . . . just farm'-nature-y, somewhere over there.

Katia: Yea I moved to- because there was a lot of situation, a lot of bad things going on in Springfield. My mom didn't like it so she tried Holyoke over here to see if it was like a quiet city, like calm and everything, but I guess not.

The link drawn between home and quiet was striking. Jade viscerally described feeling at home:

Jade: My home now. Peaceful, quiet (. . .) just do whatever (. . .) (I love) my house (. . .) the best. 'Cause my mom's house was (.) always loud, like, yeah. Always loud. Can't sleep 'cause my brothers will be up all night, well, my big brother (). Yeah, now I sleep whatever time I want, no one bothering me, well, just the baby when he wakes up, but (laughs), you know. Yeah. That's home too, my house, you know.

Participants told of efforts to find a place to call home that took them from state to state. Destinations included Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Florida. Although Florida was often described in escape terms, as a “happier” place, even a paradise where one could start over, regardless, the results were largely the same as experiences in other states.

Reyna: So I was like, wow, my God, what am I going to do with my life? So I just had to go to Pennsylvania. I'm, like, y'know, I'm gonna go to Pennsylvania, a new state. I don't know nobody. I don't know no chicks. Probably there-

Interviewer: I can't get in a fight with anybody now!

Reyna: Exactly!

Interviewer: [laughs]

Reyna: So I just had to go to Pennsylvania. Financially *sucked*.

Reyna's evaluation that her move "financially sucked" sums up the lack of material success and economic inequality. Nevertheless, her response reveals a sense of determination to do *something* with her life. Her move to a state where "I don't know no chicks" signals the social difficulties she has had; the interviewer's reference to getting in fights allows us to infer a general loss of trust in Reyna's relationships. While there is agency in taking the initiative to move to another state, it would be a leap to conclude that such a strategy signals "success." She conveys structural constraint—"I just had to go to Pennsylvania"—and yet acknowledges that things did not work out well there: "Financially *sucked*." The grim material situation signals that attaining a better future was elusive at best. Realizing the hegemonic ideals connected with family-making was beyond reach; thus, her narrative serves as a stark reminder of her subaltern status. Even with the odds stacked in favor of an uncertain future, young women such as Reyna kept trying to carve out a better life for themselves and their children. It is as though there were a force—of family, of a myth of a better future, of moving as the thing to do, of a promise of a better, quieter life. Yet the better life does not materialize. We sense the moments in which the young women feel painfully aware of the futility of moving.

Reyna: I really don't want to raise [my son] here. The reason I came back over here, just for me to get ba-, like finish school and do whatever I need to do. 'Cause really, Massachusetts really, a lot of opportunities for you, you know?

Interviewer: A lot of what?

Reyna: Opportunities.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Reyna: 'Cause when I went to Pennsylvania, they told me, they're like, "You left Massachusetts to come over here?" Like, this is a poor city. Should have stayed in Massachusetts, there's a lot of opportunities over there, a lot of, you know? So, I'm trying to finish my stuff over here, 'cause I really don't wanna raise him here. I wanna raise him in a good environment, a good place. I don't think here's a good place.

Interviewer: Where do you think would be a good place?

Reyna: I don't know, I don't know, not here.

Massachusetts was the land of opportunity and yet it, too, turned out not to be "a good place." At the same time, a sense of *trying* to attain small improvements demonstrates agency. Such attempts also may mean survival and in themselves may render a life bearable even if only on a sensory and emotional level.

While interview material deepened the striations of young mothers' lived experiences, we are not suggesting that it necessarily demonstrates a counter-narrative. On the one hand, such narratives might be read as confirming the single story on teen motherhood, that the chances of "success" are slim. On the other hand, these narratives might be interpreted as a precursor to the narrative shock that, with the help of multisensory qualities, eventually finds its way through in the context of digital stories. To be clear, counter narratives become enlivened through the multisensory quality of the co-produced digital stories. Two digital stories presented below highlight the workings of narrative shock as they transform the single story

into counter narratives. They underscore participants' felt sense of migration and movement as it impinged on their reproductive lives. (See *Hear Our Stories* to view the digital stories: <https://www.umass.edu/hearourstories/>.)

Alexandra's digital story tells of the challenges she faced after her parents emigrated to the United States from Colombia and left her behind.¹ She came to miss them: "Through the years as I grew up I realized that I needed them because pictures and phone calls weren't enough." Depression turned into rebellion. She continues:

I thought by doing this, I could forget the pain and anger I was feeling in my heart. But that wasn't what happened, since nothing good came of it. I decided to change.

Because of all the things I was doing, I got pregnant at 17 and I knew that for the good and future of my child, I needed to change. I thank God for letting me open my eyes in time. Now my son is a year old and I'm doing my best to be mother and father at once, because I don't want him to struggle with the same things I faced. My life isn't the best or the easiest but I'm trying to live it and enjoy it as best I can. I love my life, I love my beautiful son, and I love the person who was more than my grandma, she was a mother in every sense, to me and my sister.

Alexandra's narrative of becoming a young parent is deeply interconnected with the intensification of global migration. She reveals that distance mediated her relationship with her parents. On screen, we see a family of three paper dolls. As her voice references the long-distance relationship not being enough, viewers feel her pain as they watch Alexandra's hands crumple up two of the paper dolls, leaving a solitary figure that signifies her loneliness, anger, and rebellion. Turning over a new leaf, she uses images of her hands methodically cutting construction paper with scissors to convey the determined change she made in her life. The story does not convey a sense of shame but rather redemption and love.

Iris's story takes us deeper into the experience of housing insecurity as a propeller of movement. Iris lived in a shelter with her son when she was 21. Despite expectations that the shelter might be a supportive place, her digital story makes us feel her rough times. Peers judged her and staff could be cruel.

I spent most of my time in my room. 100% of the time, I had my son glued to my hip. Because if I lost track of him, they'd write me up. Things just seemed really off. My food was being taken. People would spit in others' drinks. The staff just didn't really care. I hated it because the director always had something to say. Telling me who and who I cannot be with, relationship-wise. What I should and shouldn't do. "No, you can't do your laundry here. That's your job outside the shelter." Not only would she talk down to me, but the other girls in the house, too. She'd tell us that we were worthless, we were nobodies. That we didn't know how to take care of our kids right. I worked harder every day to get myself and my kid out of there. I'd wake up and the director would be going up to my door to nag me, to see if I was ready for school. That right there motivated me even more.

There was actually one staff member who was really there for us. He told me, “You’re really strong-minded. You can achieve anything you put your mind to.” And he was right. After being in the shelter for 5 months, I finally got my apartment on May 1st, 2013.

While Iris’s digital story offers a happy ending in that she finally managed to leave the shelter and move into an apartment, it shocks us into feeling what it must be like to live in an unsupportive and oppressive shelter space with a young child. In her interview, we learned that Iris had moved around a lot. She described moving from city to city in western Massachusetts and out-of-state to Virginia. We learned that she was adopted at age one and had no contact with her biological mother and only minimal contact with her biological father. As a teenager, she missed a lot of school while caring for her adoptive mother, who was struggling with cancer. Iris often brought her mother to appointments. When her family moved back to Holyoke, the credits from her previous nearby high school would not transfer to the new high school, whose staff told her she would have to start over as a freshman. Iris dropped out of school. She began working, had a son at 19, and eventually got her GED with assistance from the Center. Iris ended up in the shelter because of a fire at her home. She briefly lived with an aunt; however, that arrangement did not work out. She elected to go to the shelter and receive services from the government in order to provide for her son. As with other stories, this one points to a pattern of migration and movement.

Conclusion

Here we return to the issue that inspired our investigation. How can digital storytelling be used to create a narrative shock to focus more productively and supportively on teen pregnancy and parenting as it is lived and realized by young parents and their families? In this article, we push beyond making the point that digital storytelling serves as a critical narrative intervention (Gubrium et al. 2018) to suggest that the quality of the intervention is one of shock. We argue that the shock occurs because the multisensory approach allows stories to convey sensibilities other than the narratives of defeat so common to the stories of everyday life in which subaltern subjects are, in Gramsci’s words, “in a state of anxious defense” (cited in Crehan 2016, 60).

Through conversations and interviews, we found a startling and common theme of temporary housing and frequent moves. The interviews revealed to us the theme of migration and mobility, and this article makes visible the conditions of migration and mobility in the young women’s lives. The digital stories humanized their experiences as mothers. The multisensory quality both of making and showing these stories creates the narrative shock. Taken together, the corpus of digital stories shifts sentiments away from the tired trope of prevention, shocking viewers to their senses, into caring about and wanting to support the storytellers and their families. The digital stories thus shock and shift viewer sensitivities to the important connection between reproductive health, mobility, and movement.

To be clear, whereas the interviews revealed the hardships, the process of making digital stories in solidarity with other women empowered participants to shift

the single story of sedentary bias and teen parenting to reveal experiences of movement and mobility as they sought to do their lives with dignity (Gubrium et al. 2018). Many women credited their participation in the study as providing a space for them to tell their stories for the first time, and for their stories to be listened to and cared about. The experience of doing something with their stories was a sign of empowerment. The workshop, as well as post-workshop activities such as leadership training and community forums, became sites for raising consciousness and legitimizing previously devalued forms of knowledge. That participants became storytellers and observers of their own lives built confidence for them to realize their narrative agency.

We argue that digital storytelling moves us from the single story of teen parenting to multiple stories that reveal the nexus of mobility and family making. Such a move can also serve as a powerful tool for narrative shock, knowledge transformation, and action. All of the moving around from place to place creates a sense of uncertainty. Circumstances that for people with means might be banal, become uncertain and unpredictable. In a sense, uncertainties result from things being broken just like the lines in Marie's sociogram drawing. Uncertainties are related to structural and contextual factors that are experientially embodied. Discrimination inscribes itself on certain bodies, including those of young parenting Latinas (Chavez 2008; De León 2015, Tuck 2012). Just as labor standards have become increasingly tenuous for many in terms of flexible, casualized, and precarious work, for our project participants the kind of mobility and movement they have experienced has exacerbated other kinds of precarities: securing safe and affordable housing, a desirable job with a living wage, and an adequate public education. Parenting and caretaking strategies become provisional, tactical, and in flux as well as deeply moored in structural vulnerabilities.

To ensure that the narrative shock continues to resonate requires that the project have an afterlife: We recommend connecting with other ongoing organizing efforts to counter shame. These findings also have implications for prevention programs, which are flawed in that they are often instrumental in orientation (i.e., focused on providing long-acting reversible contraception and didactically imparting information through comprehensive sex education), rather than focused on recognizing and disrupting dynamics of structural vulnerability that shape reproductive lives. Das criticizes this tendency in public health configurations generally, and asks: "How has an everyday ethics been honed out of these experiences?" (Das 2015, 2). Our findings call for recognition of the richness of digital storytelling in acknowledging the specific ways in which mobility is embodied, and what precisely it means for young mothers to be perpetually on the move.

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1. We use Alexandra's real name because we had permission to share her story publicly on the Hear Our Stories website and we draw here only from the context of that story, not from other interview material.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

Appendix: Codebook Excerpt (Movement, Migration, Escape, and Transcience)