EMPOWERED BLACK TEEN MOTHERS OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

EMPOWERED BLACK TEEN MOTHERS OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT. (August, 2007)

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The purpose of this study was to determine whether internal and external factors as related to Black teen mothers provide a catalyst or hindrance to their completing high school. The theoretical framework that best suited this study was constructivism and systems theory. Eight Black teen mothers provided their stories through a narrative format. Their perception of the learning environment in which they had to navigate was analyzed through the use of case studies, ethnographic interviews, and narrative storytelling and interpretation.

Three main research questions were presented to explore how internal and external factors played a part in these teen mothers' construction of their learning, subject to systems that may not have been supportive. The constructivist method was employed to show where their source of strength derived.

The findings of this study indicate a strong, positive relationship between the level of support in external environments and the formation of internal feelings and beliefs that may be a help or hindrance to these teen mothers. These teen mothers verified
this relationship. Six graduated from high school and two dropped out. The conclusion is
that educational systems need to pay more attention to the needs of teen mothers in the
form of better communication between parents, advocating for the teen mothers, promote
and support services for teen mothers such as child care, transportation, tutoring, and
counseling as needed.