

Motherhood Practices and Symbolic Capital: A Study of Teen Mothers in Northeastern Thailand

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Abstract : Teen mothers have been viewed as 'a powerless' facing numerous pressures including poverty, immaturity of motherhood, and especially social blame. This paper argues that, to endure as an agent, they keep struggling to overcome all difficulties in their everyday life by using certain symbols to negotiate the situations they encounter, and to obtain a social position without surrendering to the dominating socio-cultural structure. Guided by Bourdieu's theory of practice, this study looks at how teen mothers use symbolic capital in their motherhood practices. Although motherhood practices can be found in different contexts with various types of capital utilization, this paper focuses on the use of symbolic capitals in teen mothers' practices within the contexts of the community. The study employs a qualitative methodology; data was collected from 12 informants through life history, in-depth interview, observation and the content analytical method was employed for data analysis. The findings show that child and motherhood were key symbolic capitals in motherhood practices. Employing such capitals teen mothers can achieve an acceptance from community - particularly from the new community. These symbolic capitals were the important sources of teen mothers' power to turn the tide by changing their status - from "the powerless" to be "the agent". The use of symbolic capitals also related to habitus of teen mothers in better compromising for an appropriate social position.

Keywords : teen mother, motherhood practice, symbolic capital, community

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