EDUCATION INTERRUPTED: EXPERIENCES OF TEENAGE MOTHERS RETURNING AS ADULT STUDENTS

by
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Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Psychology (MEd Psych) in the Faculty of Education at Stellenbosch University

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December 2023

DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Women represent more than half of the world's population and, as such, their education is paramount to societal development worldwide. High pregnancy rates among South African school learners persist, with over 136,000 births recorded in 2020 among girls aged 10 to 19. A third of these young mothers do not resume their education after pregnancy and birth. This study sought to explore the lived experiences of teenage mothers whose education was disrupted by pregnancy and subsequently resumed and continued as adult students. This qualitative research is grounded in a social constructivist approach and uncovers the narratives of five South African cis female women enrolled in the Adult Education and Training (AET) programme as second-chance adult students. Purposive sampling was employed for participant selection and the data collection methods included individual narrative interviews, a planned focus group session, and an autobiographical mapping tool. The narratives uncovered the complexities of their educational trajectories and introduced themes that included contextual education, teenage pregnancy, educational continuity, and their envisioned future. The data were analysed through open coding and revealed the intricate dynamics embedded in the experiences of teenage mothers' exit from formal schooling, and their re-entry into the education system as second-chance adult learners. These women encounter persistent systemic and societal barriers as they balance multiple roles and responsibilities while navigating adult education. This study advocates for an educational landscape that empowers these women to attain their educational aspirations despite the challenges they face.

Keywords: teenage pregnancy, adult education, qualitative study, second-chance learners, education interrupted

OPSOMMING

Vroue verteenwoordig meer as die helfte van die wêreld se bevolking en as sodanig is hul opvoeding van kardinale belang vir maatskaplike ontwikkeling wêreldwyd. Hoë swangerskapsyfers onder Suid-Afrikaanse skoolleerders duur voort, met meer as 136 000 geboortes wat in 2020 aangeteken is onder meisies van 10 tot 19 jaar. 'n Derde van hierdie jong moeders hervat nie hul opleiding ná swangerskap en geboorte nie. Hierdie studie het gepoog om die geleefde ervarings van tienermoeders wie se opvoeding deur swangerskap ontwrig is en daarna hervat en voortgesit is as volwasse studente, te ondersoek. Hierdie kwalitatiewe navorsing is gegrond op 'n sosiaal-konstruktivistiese benadering en ontbloot die narratiewe van vyf Suid-Afrikaanse cis vroulike vroue wat as tweede-kans volwasse studente by die Volwasse Onderwys en Opleiding (VOO)-program ingeskryf is. Doelgerigte steekproefneming is gebruik vir deelnemerseleksie en die data-insamelingsmetodes het individuele narratiewe onderhoude, 'n beplande fokusgroepsessie en 'n outobiografiese karteringsinstrument ingesluit. Die narratiewe het die kompleksiteite van hul opvoedkundige trajekte ontbloot en temas bekendgestel wat kontekstuele opvoeding, tienerswangerskap, opvoedkundige kontinuïteit en hul beoogde toekoms ingesluit het. Die data is deur oop kodering ontleed en het die ingewikkelde dinamika onthul wat ingebed is in die ervarings van tienermoeders se uittrede uit formele skoolopleiding, en hul hertoetrede tot die onderwysstelsel as tweede-kans volwasse leerders. Hierdie vroue kom teë met aanhoudende sistemiese en sosiale hindernisse aangesien hulle verskeie rolle en verantwoordelikhede balanseer terwyl hulle volwasse onderwys navigeer. Hierdie studie pleit vir 'n opvoedkundige landskap wat hierdie vroue bemagtig om hul opvoedkundige aspirasies te bereik ten spyte van die uitdagings wat hulle in die gesig staar.

Sleutelwoorde: tienerswangerskap, volwasse onderwys, kwalitatiewe studie, tweede-kans leerders, onderbreekte onderwys

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my esteemed supervisor, Professor Daniels, whose unwavering support, invaluable guidance, and expertise have been instrumental throughout this process.

My sincere gratitude goes out to the courageous, resilient, and remarkable women of this study. Despite facing time constraints, transportation challenges, and numerous other obstacles, their willingness to engage and share their experiences has profoundly enriched this research. This work is dedicated to them.

I dedicate this to my dad, whose boundless curiosity, unwavering investment, and steadfast support have been a constant source of inspiration and motivation. Your belief in me has been a driving force behind my accomplishments. This is for you.

To my partner, Conrad, my most loyal and loving companion and supporter. I am profoundly grateful. For everything.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

The education of women and young girls is paramount to societal development worldwide (Lake & Pendlebury, 2009; Mokoena & Van Breda, 2021; Somani, 2017). Women represent more than half of the world's population and, as such, are a critical global presence and resource (Somani, 2017). Despite ample research on the influence of women's education, two thirds of the global illiterate adult population are women, with over 63 million girls out of school (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2021). Research suggests multiple reasons for this phenomenon. Low literacy levels in South Africa are inextricably linked to the country's history of segregation under apartheid legislation, the effect of which is far reaching and serves to uphold inequality across racial and gender lines (McKay, 2007). Gender-based educational inequality is a critical violation of girls' and women's rights, as the resulting lack of formal education restricts women's participation in social and economic development (Somani, 2017). The empowering potential of education expands across other domains that include women's empowerment, sense of agency, and self-esteem (Daniels, 2020; Hanmer & Klugman, 2016). Many studies show that education is the most efficient and sustainable response to global issues such as poverty, health, injustice, and conflict (Somani, 2017). Andrés and Chavez (2015) emphasise the role of education in empowering individuals to bring about positive social change by improving their human capabilities.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) affirms education as a fundamental human right. However, many South African girls never complete their schooling (Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Spaull, 2013). School dropout happens when a learner discontinues their school attendance prior to completing their grade or school phase. This phenomenon is considered a global issue associated with diminished psychological, physical, social, and economic health (Mokoena & Van Breda, 2021). In South Africa, approximately 60% of learners drop out of

school before completing secondary school (Mokoena & Van Breda, 2021; Weybright et al., 2017).

Research on school dropout identifies teenage pregnancy as the main predictor of school dropout among adolescent girls (Ardington et al., 2015; Clark & Mathur, 2012; Grant & Hallman, 2008; Marteleto et al., 2008; Stoner et al., 2019; Timæus & Moultrie, 2015; Weybright et al., 2017). Teenage or adolescent pregnancy refers to pregnancy that occurs among women under the age of 20 (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2008). Teenage pregnancy may arise from multiple factors, including social constraints, household dysfunction, external influences, poverty, lack of information, and sexual assault (Thobejane, 2015), and prevails in populations affected by extreme adversity (Jochim et al., 2020). The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 allows for pregnant teenagers to continue attending school and to resume their education after giving birth. Furthermore, the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (No. 4 of 2000) emphasises that pregnant school learners should not experience unjust discrimination (Willan, 2013). Bhana et al. (2008) observed that SASA pertained exclusively to mothers and not to fathers, thereby reinforcing gendered norms that place the responsibility of childcare predominantly on women. The Department of Basic Education (DoE) and National Department of Health (NdoH) promulgated several policies and guidelines, including the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy (MPMLP) in 2007 (Department of Education, 2007), the Integrated School Health Policy (ISHP) in 2012 (Department of Health, 2012a), and the National Contraception Policy Guidelines (Department of Health, 2012b) and a booklet on Preventing Teenage Pregnancy in 2012. Despite various policies and intervention strategies, numerous concerns regarding conflicting and contradictory approaches remain central to the enduring challenge of school dropout among teenage mothers (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019).

Teenage pregnancy remains a global social and educational concern, despite the implementation of intervention strategies at schools and the availability of contraception (Nkosi

& Pretorius, 2019). O'Regan (2021) found an unacceptably high rate of pregnancy among school learners in South Africa and reports that more than 136 000 babies were born to girls between the ages of 10 and 19 years in 2020. Ngqakamba (2021) further reports that one in three pregnant girls between the ages of 10 and 19 years does not return to school. There is a paucity of research that can shed light on the reasons why these teenage mothers do not resume their education.

Chigona and Chetty's study (2017) found teenage pregnancy to be a barrier to girls' education and that it not only interrupts, but also disrupts, their schooling. A review of the literature on teenage pregnancy in South Africa yielded substantial evidence that suggests that childcare responsibilities are gendered and typically fall to the teenage mother (Willan, 2013). As a result, approximately 33% of teenage mothers do not return to formal schooling to complete their education. There are multiple factors that contribute to whether teenage mothers return to school after the birth of their babies, most of which relate to logistics and finances associated with the concurrent roles of parent and student, which may lead to frequent absenteeism (Chigona & Chetty, 2007; Kaufman et al., 2001). Daniels (2020) confirms the negative effect of prolonged school absenteeism on learners' education and emphasises the resultant consequences of missed opportunities. Other factors include the alienation and stigmatisation of teenage mothers by their peers, parents, and teachers (Chigona & Chetty, 2007; Chohan & Langa, 2011). Teenage mothers who do not return to school have the option of continuing their schooling through adult education and training (AET).

The restructuring of the education system that followed the abolishment of apartheid legislation prompted the formalisation of AET, which sought to provide second-chance educational opportunities for adults who had dropped out of school to complete their basic education and to expand their educational trajectories (Daniels, 2020). According to Simkins (2019), the primary incentive for enrolment is to acquire a General Education and Training

Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training (GETC) or a National Senior Certificate (NSC) in the hopes of gaining access to improved educational and occupational opportunities.

This study was interested in exploring the intricate and complex lived experiences of teenage mothers whose education was interrupted by pregnancy and who were returning to school as adult students. Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth theory was used to frame the analysis of participants' construction and reconstruction of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Yosso identifies six dynamic forms of capital through which communities sustain cultural wealth: aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital. These six forms of capital are examined in Chapter 2.

1.2   Statement of the problem

Women's education is fundamental to global societal development, yet one third of illiterate adults worldwide are female (Lake & Pendlebury, 2009; Mokoena & Van Breda, 2021; Somani, 2017; UNESCO, 2021). Research suggests teenage pregnancy to be a leading cause of school dropout among teenage girls. Approximately 33% of teenage mothers do not return to school after the birth of their babies (Ngqakamba, 2021). This study argues that teenage pregnancy contributes to educational inequality, as it not only interrupts, but also disrupts, girls' education (Chigona & Chetty, 2007).

The AET learner population includes many former high school dropouts and returning students who were refused admission to high schools due to former transgressions and their age. Simkins (2019) reports that 71% of learners enrolled at Community Education and Training Colleges (CETC) in 2016 were female. This study's contribution lies in its potential to advance knowledge about the lived experiences of teenage mothers as non-traditional students. Their stories will provide valuable insights into the motivation for and navigation of education as a second-chance opportunity.

**1.3	Aims of the study**

The primary aim of this study was to promote in-depth understanding of the experiences of teenage mothers returning to schooling as adult students. The study sought to explore participants' motivation for continuing their education, the ways in which they navigate AET as second-chance learners, and the challenges they experience as returning adult students. Their respective and collective experiences as second-chance adult students make visible the complex and dynamic realities of teenage mothers as they navigate their studies.

**1.4	Research questions**

This study set out to answer the following question: What are the lived experiences of teenage mothers who have had their education interrupted by pregnancy when returning to school as adult students?

The sub-questions included the following:

1.	What motivated the women to continue their education through AET?

2.	How are these women navigating AET as second-chance learners?

3.	What are the challenges they experience as adult learners?

**1.5	Population and sample**

The target population of this study was cis female South African adults whose formal primary or high school education was interrupted by teenage pregnancy and motherhood and who returned as adult students. The sample population was enrolled in the AET programme at a Community Learning Centre (CLC) at the time of data collection. The location of the study was Cape Town in the Western Cape province. Purposive sampling was used to identify and purposefully select five participants who fit this profile.

1.6   Research design and methodology

An in-depth exploration of the participants' realities and lived experiences called for a qualitative research design situated in a social constructivist approach (Daniels, 2020; Kim, 2014). Qualitative research is concerned with dimensions of reality and the exploration of the dynamics of social relations (Queirós et al., 2017). Social constructivism observes the construction of meaning within the historical, cultural, and social spheres of understanding to interpret human experience (Kim, 2014). This line of inquiry corresponds with transformational learning. Narrative inquiry was employed, as it stems from the epistemological assumption that people unravel lived experiences through story structures (Bell, 2002). In-depth understanding of the lived experiences and subsequent narratives of teenage mothers returning as adult students gave insight into the extent to which these experiences are embedded in the adult learning context, and how long-term investment in participation can be nurtured and sustained. This inquiry went beyond the explicit details of individual stories to uncover the assumptions that underlie the construction of the stories that will provide valuable information about the beliefs and experiences of teenage mothers returning as adult students and their investment in participating in AET (Bell, 2002; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002).

1.6.1   Data collection

The intended data collection methods included narrative interviews, combined with semi-structured interview techniques and a focus group session. The latter proved to be unachievable, given the participants' individual and collective circumstances. Additional discussion of this is included in Chapter 4. Narratives are regarded as representations and interpretations of experience and are not bound by evidentiary support in establishing truthfulness (Muylaert et al., 2014). Narrative interviews are not designed with a fixed agenda in mind, but rather tend to relinquish control of the content, direction, and pace of the interview to the interviewee. This allows the interviewer to gain access to the interviewee's

representations of experiences and to interpret them from the initiated interaction. This study drew on an in-depth review of the available literature to inform the development of a topic guide that could highlight areas of interest (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016). This encouraged the flow and neutrality of the interview, while limiting the participants to responding within a delimited field of inquiry (Muylaert et al., 2014).

The 'River of Life' is an autobiographical mapping tool that is meant to be introduced in a focus group setting following the individual narrative interviews. Considering the intricate dynamics of these women's experiences, the 'River of Life' technique was included in the initial planning to allow participants to express themselves in multiple forms, and beyond the linguistic confines of narrative interviews. A study by Denov and Shevell (2021) found that participants were often unable to find the words to communicate their experiences. The visual representation that this method elicits is also considered to engage participants in a meaningful, reflective, and collective experience. This method invites participants to draw the course of their life using the metaphor of a river, showing the ebbs and flows and obstacles they have had to face. The discussions that followed were focused on the participants' reflections on their past and their envisioned future. Similar to narrative interviews, the participants are given ample scope to draw according to their own criteria and to include elements they deem relevant and important (Denov & Shevell, 2021). As an alternative means of collecting this valuable information, participants were given instructions over the phone and asked to draw their rivers of life using the stationery that had been provided to them during their individual interviews. Three of the five participants managed to complete their drawings and send a picture of their work via WhatsApp.

1.6.2   Theoretical framework

For my analysis of their stories, I used transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000) as my lens to make sense of the participants' educational trajectories. I drew from feminist theory to

inform my thinking on and interpretation of these women's paths to adult education as a second-chance opportunity. Intersectionality (Carastathis, 2014; Cho et al., 2013) provided a critical framework within which the dynamic between ethnicity, class, and other social categories was explored in relation to issues of inequality and injustice. Intersectionality as understood in feminist theory served to illustrate the dynamic between multiple and interwoven systems of women's oppression, encapsulated by their unique narratives of their lived experiences (Carastathis, 2014). I referenced community cultural wealth theory (Yosso, 2005) to explore the resilience of these returning students.

1.7   Trustworthiness and credibility of the study

Trustworthiness was crucial to the value and integrity of the findings of this study. Trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence in the data and subsequent interpretation, and the methodology employed in a study to ensure the quality of the research (Connelly, 2016). According to Kyngäs et al. (2020) and Leung (2015), what constitutes trustworthiness has been the topic of debate among researchers, especially in terms of qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) divide trustworthiness into credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, the most important of which is credibility (Polit & Beck, 2014).

Connelly (2016) describes credibility as "the confidence in the truth of the study". Credibility concerns the degree to which the findings of the study depict a credible interpretation of the gathered data (Kyngäs et al., 2020). This study employed a carefully and meticulously selected research design underpinned by an extensive literature review that ensured a credible interpretation of its findings. Purposive sampling ensured that participants were selected according to criteria that aligned with the research question.

1.8   Ethics

The ethical considerations of the study were considerable and necessitated consistent care, review, and mitigation. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) depict two dimensions of ethics: procedural ethics and ethics in practice.

Procedural ethics are mandated by institutional committees to ensure the procedures used ethically address informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and protecting participants from harm. The principle of autonomy was observed by way of informed consent. Participants were formally informed of the nature of the present study, their required contributions, how their identities would be protected, and how the results would be used (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). This information was presented verbally and in writing, and the participants were required to sign their consent. This ensured and preserved the participants' autonomy in voluntarily accepting or rejecting participation in this study (Orb et al., 2001). The principle of beneficence was maintained through confidentiality. Saunders et al. (2015) define confidentiality as the non-disclosure of all information obtained within the bounds of the related study. Participants were informed of the limits of confidentiality and of the circumstances under which such limits came into play (Adu-Gyamfi, 2015). Confidentiality protected the participants' privacy, negated the risk of harm or stigmatisation, and established trust between them and the researcher (Crow et al., 2006). This notion carried over to the principle of justice, which emphasises the researcher's recognition of participants' vulnerability and contributions to the study (Orb et al., 2001). The proposal for the current research was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee (REC) for ethical clearance, which was granted in November of 2022.

Ethics in practice refers to situational ethics – ethically important occurrences that come up during the research process. Ellis (2007) proposes a third dimension of ethics: relational ethics. Narrative inquiry elicits stories of personal experience that are embedded within cultural, social, and political narratives. Clandinin et al. (2018) position relational ethics at the

heart of narrative inquiry. Relational ethics is closely linked to an ethics of care that requires researchers to acknowledge the interpersonal connections between them and others, and to take responsibility for actions and consequences (Ellis, 2007). Relational ethics acknowledges and esteems mutual respect, dignity, and veracity between the researcher and the participants.

1.9   Limitations and delimitations

This thesis is a 50% requirement for the M Ed degree. As such, it is of limited scope. This study is delimited to the context in which it exists. Skilton-Sylvester (2002) emphasises the limitations of traditional views on adult motivation and participation in that they fail to acknowledge the intricate dynamic among adult learners' identities, their social contexts, their learning context, and their investment. These inextricable complexities and intricacies motivated the chosen research design. This study did not attempt to assign frequencies to the features and phenomena identified in the data, nor did it seek to extend the findings to wider populations.

1.10   Summary

The study sought to gain in-depth understandings of the experiences of teenage mothers whose education was interrupted by teenage pregnancy and who returned as adult students. Incapacitating poverty, disabling inequality, low literacy levels, underperforming schools, and higher rates of teenage pregnancy and school dropout among black African and coloured adolescent population groups (Statistics South Africa, 2018) are inextricably linked to the country's history of segregation under apartheid legislation, the impact of which remains far-reaching and serves to uphold inequality across racial and gender lines (McKay, 2007). A deeply rooted understanding of these complexities embedded in particular roles, which may include family roles, especially as mothers, students, and current workers, was instrumental in understanding participation in adult education programmes (Skilton-Sylvester, 2002). Five

participants were selected by means of purposeful sampling. Data were collected through individual narrative interviews and an autobiographical mapping tool called the 'River of Life' technique.

The chapters that follow include in-depth explorations of the theoretical underpinnings of the current research topic. A thorough review of the relevant literature was compiled, and the nature and design of the research process, along with related ethical considerations, are reported on in greater detail. The gathered data were meticulously and methodically interpreted, reported, and discussed in rigorous detail.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

This chapter envelops the outcome of an extensive review of the relevant literature relative to a larger ongoing dialogue about the educational experiences of women as second-chance adult students.

This literature review provides a foundation of existing knowledge on the research topic to situate and synthesise the study in existing research and to establish the significance of this line of inquiry (Denney & Tewksbury, 2013; Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). This chapter starts with an overview of the literature that was embedded in my theoretical and conceptual framing of the study. I start with a critical evaluation of transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000) as a framework within which women's educational experiences as adults are explored. I situate women's education within the broader trajectory of adult education post-1994 and review feminist theory (Cho et al., 2013), which served to inform my thinking and interpretation of the participants' paths to adult education as second-chance learners. A comprehensive exploration of intersectionality (Carastathis, 2014; Cho et al., 2013) served to guide my perceptions of the participants' opportunities amid multiple sociopolitical and sociocultural systems engrained in their unique narratives of their lived experiences. Community cultural wealth theory (Yosso, 2005) offers a foundation for understanding the qualities that these women possess and employ in order to maximise their opportunities and oppose oppression. I explore teenage pregnancy within the realm of education and, finally, move to review second-chance learning as a dimension of adult education and training.

2.2   Theoretical framing of the study

2.2.1   Transformative learning

Transformative learning theory is a prominent framework that explains how individuals can experience significant changes in their thinking, beliefs, and perspectives through critical reflection and discourse (Kitchenham, 2008). According to Mezirow (2000), transformative learning involves a 'shift in consciousness' that occurs when individuals question their assumptions and reconstruct their understanding of the world. Transformative learning theory has been applied in various educational settings, including adult education, leadership development, and social justice, to promote self-awareness, empathy, and personal growth (Cranton, 2006; Taylor, 2017).

Mezirow's model of perspective transformation emerged from his research on women returning to formal education after a lengthy break (Taylor, 1997). Mezirow (1991, p. 167) offers the following definition of a perspective transformation:

> The process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and finally making choices or otherwise acting on these new understandings.

This model of perspective transformation is frequently depicted as a sequential, albeit not always step-by-step, process that starts with a disorienting dilemma and progresses through self-examination of feelings, critical reflection, exploring and planning new roles, negotiating relationships, gaining confidence, and developing a more open-minded and discriminating perspective (Taylor, 1997).

A disorienting dilemma is an acute internal or external personal crisis that serves as the catalyst and initial stage of Mezirow's perspective transformation model (Taylor, 1997). These disorienting dilemmas may be brought on by a personal crisis or a string of coincidental occurrences (Laros et al., 2017). Many studies that examine the exhaustive process of a perspective transformation are in accordance with this aspect of Mezirow's model. Other studies have sought to expand on the definition of a disorienting dilemma. Clark (1991, 1993) examined the role and influence of context in the process of perspective transformation. She reported 'integrating circumstances' to be just as likely as disorienting dilemmas in evoking transformative learning. Integrating circumstances refer to unknown periods of time during which an individual searches for something that they consider to be missing in their lives. When found, the transformative process is triggered. Pope (1996), whose research focused on women of colour, found the catalyst event to be more of a gradual conversion as opposed to a crisis response.

Mezirow (1990) states that critically reflecting on how we have approached situations and re-evaluating our approach to perceiving, knowing, understanding, feeling, and behaving constitute some of the most important learning experiences in adulthood. In the alteration of meaning structures, he distinguishes between three types of reflection: content, process, and premise (Lundgren & Poell, 2016). Content reflection refers to an analysis of the content or description of a problem, while process reflection relates to the problem-solving strategies that are being implemented (Mezirow, 1990; Williams, 2001). The least prevalent of the three and the foundation for critical reflection, premise reflection, includes examining ingrained preconceptions that underlie the problem (Taylor, 1997; Williams, 2001). Examining the fundamental nature, implications, and sources of our perspectives on meaning through critical reflection might result in a perspective transformation (Taylor, 1997). Sveinunggaard (1993) found critical reflection to commence only once related feelings had been acknowledged and processed. Emotions thus serve as the catalyst for reflection.

Studies demonstrating the need for 'other ways of knowing' have been conducted in response to criticisms of transformational learning theory's over-reliance on rationality (Taylor, 1997). Several studies address the value of intuition, affective learning, and extrarational influences (Brooks, 1989; Clark, 1991; Hunter, 1980; Scott, 1991; Sveinunggaard, 1993; Taylor, 1994; Vogelsang, 1993). Clark (1991) distinguishes between the psychological (changes in self-understanding), convictional (revision of belief systems), and behavioural (changes in conduct) elements of a viewpoint transformation (changes in lifestyle). Van Nostrand (1992) interpreted a perspective transformation as a revelation that included new knowledge concepts, a spiritual experience, inner strength, and a redefined perspective, followed by a sustained change over time. This reconceptualisation of transformative learning makes room for the awareness and utilisation of all human capacities for knowledge, including cognitive, emotive, physical, intuitive, and spiritual dimensions. Critiques of transformational learning theory have also pointed out its limitations in addressing the experiences of marginalised groups, particularly women in non-Western contexts (Kilgore & Bloom, 2002; Raditloaneng et al., 2015).

Mezirow's description of a disorienting dilemma has drawn criticism for being decontextualised, implying that all life crises would result in a change of perspective (Taylor, 1993). Taylor (1993) offers the immediate and historical context of the individual's life crisis as a possible determinant of whether a disorienting dilemma leads to a perspective shift. Clarke and Wilson (1991) were among the first to demonstrate that Mezirow's original research on women returning to school had predominantly disregarded the historical and sociocultural contexts that had shaped these women's learning experiences. Although Mezirow (2000) acknowledged the role of context in transformational learning, he did not expand on the ways in which it integrates or affects learning (Raditloaneng et al., 2015).

Context reflects the sociocultural and personal variables that influence the process of transformative learning. In general, these factors include the surroundings of the immediate

learning event. These includes the individual's current personal and professional circumstances, as well as a broader context that alludes to the social and familial history that shaped the individual growing up (Taylor, 1997). These personal factors are found in what is referred to by multiple studies as a readiness for change (Hunter, 1980; Van Nostrand, 1992), the significance of experience, previous life stressors (Vogelsang, 1993), and a propensity for a transformative experience. In his study on the transformational nature of intercultural competence, Taylor (1994) reported that participants were prepared for change because of earlier significant events, individual objectives, or prior intercultural experiences. Sociocultural factors have been examined as life histories, historical factors, and traditions, and as a pre-transition stage. A study by Olson and Kleine (1993) found that the past high school experience of rural mid-life college students altered the nature of trigger events leading to college application, thereby providing a strong illustration of the sociocultural nature of context.

The findings in this review of transformational learning clearly illustrate that changes in perspective occur in a range of adults in various phases of their life, and in a variety of contexts and environments.

2.2.2   Adult education post-1994

Adult education encompasses a comprehensive range of organised educational processes that extend beyond initial education in formal institutions like schools, colleges, universities, and apprenticeships. It caters to individuals considered adults by their society, enabling them to enhance their skills, expand their knowledge, progress in their technical or professional qualifications, or even pursue significant shifts in their life trajectories to bring about positive change in their surroundings (Lalendle et al., 2020).

South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994 propelled the country into a new political era but left it in the shackles of crippling racial inequality and excruciating poverty (Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Francis & Webster, 2019). Prior to the dismantling of apartheid, the country's education

system was rigidly segregated (Unterhalter, 1990). Basic education for black South African children was non-compulsory, segregated from, and secondary to that of white South African children (Daniels, 2020). Social injustice was integral to the country's sociopolitical structure that inculcated and upheld apartheid ideology (Zipin et al., 2015). Black children's education was of inferior quality and designed to keep them out of the economic sector. Schools for black children became one of many control agencies established to exploit and marginalise the black community (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). The subjugation of women was central to the system of apartheid (Meer, 1985). Women were abandoned, isolated, and conditioned to bearing and raising children. Segregation and centralisation, as distinct features of the apartheid education system, had debilitating consequences for black South African women, who remained uneducated, illiterate, exploited, and impoverished due to inadequate school provision and extreme poverty (Unterhalter, 1990). Khuluvhe (2021) states that 4.4 million South African adults remain illiterate, with higher illiteracy levels for females that males. Statistics from the 2019 General Household Survey (GHS) indicate that more than two thirds of this group are under the age of 60, and nearly a third are under the age of 50. These age groups make up a significant portion of the working-age population.

Decades of legislated segregation demanded social, economic, and political reform, and given the central role of education in the cultivation and maintenance of apartheid ideology, education was prioritised as a catalyst for such systemic reform (Spaull, 2013). The objectives of a restructured education system were stipulated in section 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), which affirms education as a fundamental human right upheld by broader constitutional values and principles, and protected, promoted, and fulfilled through legislation and related policies (Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Lake & Pendlebury, 2009). The right to basic education applies to all children and adults. Despite this radical political shift, many social structures, including schools, continued to function as they had under apartheid laws

and remain characterised by underperformance and high rates of grade repetition and school dropout (Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Spaull, 2013; Taylor et al., 2003).

2.2.3 Feminist theory

Feminist theory is a critical perspective that seeks to understand and challenge gender-based inequalities and power dynamics in society (Parrillo, 2008). Rooted in the social and political movements of the 19th and 20th centuries, feminist theory has evolved to encompass a range of approaches and disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, literature, and philosophy (Lay & Daley, 2007; Parrillo, 2008). Feminist scholars have critiqued traditional theories and methodologies for their androcentrism and exclusion of women's experiences and have developed alternative frameworks that centre women's voices and perspectives (Eisenstein, 2018).

Intersectionality is a concept that has been developed within feminist theory to address the ways in which gender intersects with other social categories such as race, class, and sexuality (Crenshaw, 1989). Feminism and feminist theory, according to black feminists like Kimberlé Crenshaw, could not speak to the experiences of black women, since they primarily represented the lives of white women. Instead, black feminists contended that both gender and race affect black women's lives and identities. For Crenshaw, intersectionality is a method especially proficient at capturing and theorising the duality of racial and gender processes in social systems (Merrill & Fejes, 2018). Hankivsky (2022) states that the concept of intersectionality encourages people to consider how various social contexts, such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, disability or ability, and religion interact to shape human beings. These encounters take place in a setting of interconnected systems and power structures, such as laws, policies, state governments, and the media. They argue that interdependent forms of privilege and oppression formed by colonialism, imperialism, racism, homophobia, ableism, and patriarchy are produced through such processes. In South Africa,

a strongly ingrained patriarchal culture still predominates society, preventing women from rising to positions of top leadership and having an equal share of power in education (Cotter, 2017; Mahlase, 1997). African feminisms seek awareness of contexts, cultures, and peoples, and critique and reject hegemonic narratives that generalise and essentialise the status of African women, men, and children. Such a strategy necessitates describing specific national or regional patterns, while also drawing attention to contextual variances within more general trends (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010).

Women's education in South Africa is inextricably linked to the country's political and socioeconomic history, and an exploration of women's educational experiences as adults should be explored within their unique contexts. This study considers incomplete schooling to be a possible disorienting dilemma, the influence and consequences of which are yet to be discovered and offered as contribution to the broader understanding of women's motivation and reasoning for continuing their education as returning adults students.

2.2.4   Community cultural wealth theory

Community cultural wealth theory is an asset-based framework that highlights the cultural wealth that individuals from non-dominant communities bring with them into academic spaces. This theory, developed by Tara J Yosso (2005), seeks to challenge the deficit-based perspective (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) that dominated discussions of education and achievement among marginalised communities. Yosso's work draws on critical race theory and other frameworks that centre the experiences of communities of colour to articulate a new vision for how to better understand the cultural assets that students from these communities bring to academic settings (Yosso, 2005). Community cultural wealth theory emphasises that cultural wealth should not be seen as a deficit, but rather as an asset that can be leveraged to achieve success in academic and professional pursuits.

Critical race theory (CRT) in education underlies the development of community cultural wealth theory (Yosso & Burciaga, 2016; Yosso, 2005). CRT emerged in the 1980s with the goal of creating fresh perspectives on racism as related to post-civil rights laws (Barnes, 1990; Crenshaw, 1988). CRT is built on an interdisciplinary foundation and incorporates critical frameworks such as ethnic studies, women's studies, critical legal studies, and others (Acevedo & Solórzano, 2021; Solórzano et al., 2000). CRT in education, according to Solórzano (1998), is a framework for challenging the prevalent discourse on race and racism in relation to education by exploring the ways in which education theory, policy, and practice are utilised to marginalise particular racial and ethnic groups. Drawing from a variety of disciplines, five guiding principles of CRT in education are identified, the last of which mandates that scholars use multidisciplinary methods and tools when researching racial issues in educational settings (Delgado, 1989; Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano, 1998). This principal recognises that communal cultural wealth existed in historical events prior to being formally identified as such (Acevedo & Solórzano, 2021; Solórzano, 1998).

Community cultural wealth theory posits that there are six forms of cultural wealth that individuals from non-dominant communities possess. These capitals evolved from an increase in resources embedded in the personal and shared histories of people and communities of colour (Yosso, 2005). These six forms of capital are aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005). Aspirational capital refers to the dreams, hopes, and goals that individuals hold for themselves and their communities. Aspirational capital involves the belief in one's own ability to succeed and have a positive impact on society, despite obstacles. Aspirational capital is derived from the cultural and spiritual treasure of groups of people who have survived by fighting for survival and resisting oppression.

Navigational capital refers to the ability of individuals to navigate social and cultural systems that may be unfamiliar or hostile to them. Navigational capital involves the knowledge and skills needed to navigate institutional barriers and overcome obstacles. The experiences of

communities of colour in navigating the systems of power and privilege that influence their lives serve as a source of navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) Cuellar et al. (2017) state that navigational capital acknowledges the transitional areas that students operate in and the ways in which they adapt to new cultures within an educational context. A study by Araujo (2011) focused on aiding students with their transition into and through college and found that, while the identified programme provided students with resources, the students themselves provided much needed support to one another.

Social capital refers to the ability of individuals to build and maintain social networks that can provide support and resources. Social capital involves the importance of community connections and the ability to navigate social hierarchies and power dynamics (Yosso, 2005). The webs of connections that exist within and across communities of colour, as well as the abilities and knowledge required to negotiate intricate social institutions, serve as sources of social capital (Yosso, 2005).

Linguistic capital refers to the ability of individuals to use their language skills to navigate different social and cultural contexts. Linguistic capital involves the mastery of multiple languages and the ability to switch between them as needed (Yosso, 2005). The Western Cape Government (2021) identifies three official provincial languages, namely Afrikaans, English, and isiXhosa. South Africa has twelve official languages, adding to the intricacy of the country's linguistic dynamic. The diversity of languages and dialects used in communities of colour, as well as the knowledge and abilities that come with being multilingual, are encompassed by linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005).

Familial capital refers to the knowledge, skills, and values that are passed down from one generation to the next within families and communities. Familial capital involves the importance of family and community connections and the knowledge that is shared within these networks. Yosso (2005) extends Delgado Bernal's (2001) work on pedagogies of the

home, which includes practices and learning that take place in the home and community and help to create resistance tactics, by focusing on familial capital.

Finally, resistant capital refers to the ability of individuals and communities to resist and challenge systems of oppression and marginalisation. Resistant capital involves the knowledge and skills needed to challenge and transform dominant narratives and power structures (Acevedo & Solórzano, 2021; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Yosso, 2005). A study by O'Shea (2016) found that first-generation college students actively enacted resistance capital to support their postsecondary objectives. Students who have access to the capital and resources already available can leverage the community's cultural wealth and continue to pursue their higher education ambitions, even after being advised that their background would prevent them from doing so.

2.3 Situating teenage pregnancy within education

According to the Chief Director for Women's Maternal and Reproductive Health at the National Department of Health in South Africa, Dr Manala Makua (2021), thousands of girls between the ages of 10 and 19 fall pregnant annually and leave school as a result. Approximately 130 000 infants were born to girls between the ages of 10 and 19 in 2019. In 2020, this number grew to 136 386 deliveries for girls in the same age group, 1 053 of which were for girls between the ages of 10 and 14 in the first quarter alone (O'Regan, 2021). Although South Africa's teenage pregnancy rate had been rising annually, this significant increase in data in 2020 was primarily attributable to the Covid-19 outbreak and the ensuing lockdowns, which kept students out of class for extended periods of time (O'Regan, 2021).

According to Statistics South Africa (2018), dropout rates are typically greater in the higher grades, with the highest dropout rate being in grade 11 (24.08%), followed by grade 10 (14.84%). Khuluvhe (2021) reports that 53.7% of the population aged 20 and older who have not completed grade 7 and above are female. Several studies consider teenage pregnancy to

be the primary reason for school dropout among girls (Rosenberg et al., 2015; Stoner et al., 2019; Weybright et al., 2017). Sibeko (2012) identifies stigma as the driving force behind peers' and adults' altered approach to pregnant teenagers, resulting in feelings of shame and the loss of emotional support. Pregnancy-related symptoms such as fatigue, nausea, vomiting, and dizziness, as well as having to care for a newborn, lead to increased absenteeism (Stoner et al., 2019). When these factors come into collective play, poor academic performance and dropout are not only possible, but likely outcomes (Mokoena & Van Breda, 2021).

Mokoena and Van Breda (2021) emphasise the role of policies and structural factors beyond these girls' control that openly and inherently force them out of the educational system. While the Measures for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy (MPLMP) (Department of Education, 2007) permits learners to stay in school for the duration of their pregnancy, the policy also advises against mothers returning to school in the same year in which they fell pregnant. The policy allows young mothers to take leave of absence from school for up to two years to tend to their parental responsibilities, after which they are required to produce a medical certificate affirming their eligibility to return to school (Jochim et al., 2020). Despite ample criticism and calls for revision, no official changes had been made until the approval of the Teenage Pregnancy Policy, which was implemented in January 2022 (South African Government, 2021). This policy emphasises the pregnant learner's right to remain in school, as do the male learners who impregnate them, and permits their return to school soon after giving birth. Schools are required to ensure that pregnant learners are accommodated and that their schooling is not disrupted or ended as a result of pregnancy (Citizen reporter, 2021).

Two concerns arise from the gathered research. One, that policies allowing teenage mothers to return to school are not automatic propellers of gender equality in schools, nor do they assist these girls in succeeding at school (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019), and two, that teenage

pregnancy is a barrier to girls' education that not only interrupts, but also disrupts, their schooling (Chigona & Chetty, 2007).

2.4   Situating second-chance learning within adult education

National aspirations of a better life for all South Africans post-apartheid gave rise to the Reconstruction and Development Policy (African National Congress [ANC], 1994), which foregrounded community development and adult literacy. Literacy is integral to human resource development because it enables people to participate in and contribute to economic development (McKay, 2007; Muodumogu, 2012; Tawiah & Ngmenkpieo, 2018). Prior to 1994, adult basic education programmes had a liberatory agenda and adopted an emancipatory stance that called attention to education for liberation through social and political transformation. This stance was closely related to the work of Paulo Freire (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004). According to Freire, the individual and society are constructed through education that can either empower or subjugate (Leonard & McLaren, 2002). Freire considers education and politics to be inseparable, thereby emphasising the role of education in opposing inequality and social injustice (Leonard & McLaren, 2002).

The restructuring of the education system that followed the abolishment of apartheid legislation prompted the formalisation of Adult Education and Training (AET), and the accreditation of its adult basic education and training (ABET) programmes (Daniels, 2020). An estimated 1 440 public adult education centres (PALCs) were registered in South Africa in 1994 (Aitchison & Land, 2019).

Driven by high rates of unemployment and poverty post-apartheid, the formalisation of AET in South Africa was framed within a human capital paradigm (Daniels, 2020). This was a shift away from the emancipatory stance of the non-formal AET agenda. Human capital is purported to embody the knowledge, skills, and approaches that contribute to economic productivity (Baptiste, 2001). It refers to the income-producing capacity of individuals and is instrumental

in the restructuring of education (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004; Brown, 1999; Fragoso & Lucio-Villegas, 2002). AET was formalised in accordance with various policies, which include the White Paper on Education and Training (Republic of South Africa, Department of Education [RSA DoE], 1995a), the South African Qualifications Authority Act (RSA DoE, 1995b), the National Education Policy Act (RSA DoE, 1996), and the Adult Education and Training Act (RSA DoE, 2000). These policies mobilised a shift in the purpose of AET from that of an emancipatory nature to providing opportunities for formal qualification and affording out-of-school youth the chance to better their work prospects (Daniels, 2020). This shift gave rise to second-chance educational opportunities for semi-literate adults who had dropped out of school as teenage mothers to complete their basic education and to expand their educational trajectories.

The empowering potential of AET programmes surpasses the mere employability of their students (Daniels, 2020). Using econometric analysis as part of their exploration of women's agency and empowerment in developing countries, Hanmer and Klugman (2016) identified multiple associating factors. The study found education to have the greatest and most stable association with women's sense of agency across different domains. Agency solicits a propensity for overcoming barriers, challenging oppression, resisting, and changing regressive norms, and making oneself heard in society (Hanmer & Klugman, 2016; Kabeer, 2008). Agency is exercised in multiple spheres of life and encapsulates cognitive changes that include increased self-confidence, autonomy, motivation, and perceived respect (Sen, 1985).

2.5   Summary

This chapter provided the findings of a thorough analysis of the pertinent literature in relation to a larger ongoing discussion of the educational experiences of women as second-chance adult students.

A comprehensive review of transformational learning theory illustrated the considerable shifts in individual perspectives, beliefs, and ways of thinking that stem from critical reflection and dialogue. This theory allowed the study to position teenage pregnancy as a potential disorienting dilemma and subsequent catalyst for evoking such changes. Women's education and teenage pregnancy and motherhood were situated within the larger academic discourse of adult education in a post-1994 South Africa through the lens of feminist theory and intersectionality. This in-depth review served to elucidate the individual narratives embedded in many sociopolitical and sociocultural systems that underlie these women's lived experiences. Community cultural wealth theory served to delineate the abilities, knowledge, skills, and capabilities that members of minority ethnic groups possess and use to increase their chances of success in life and to resist injustice.

This literature review provided a foundation of existing knowledge of the multiple dimensions of women's education as second-chance learners and the experiences of teenage mothers returning as adult students.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

In this chapter I present an overview of the research design and methodology of the study. I also engage with the key decisions and considerations pertaining to the study's design and methodology. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations.

3.2   Problem statement

Women's education is fundamental to global societal development, yet one third of illiterate adults worldwide are female (Lake & Pendlebury, 2009; Mokoena & Van Breda, 2021; Somani, 2017; UNESCO, 2021). Research suggests that teenage pregnancy is the leading motivation for school dropout among teenage girls, of whom a third do not return to school after giving birth (Ngqakamba, 2021). This critical challenge of school dropout among teenage mothers endures, despite various policies and interventions (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). Teenage pregnancy both interrupts and disrupts young girls' schooling (Chigona & Chetty, 2017). Against this background, adult education and training (AET) provides teenage mothers with a second-chance educational opportunity to improve their eligibility for improved educational and occupational opportunities (Daniels, 2020; Simkins, 2019). However, there is limited research on and knowledge of how this this sub-population navigates education post-pregnancy.

This qualitative study is concerned with the intricate and complex lived experiences of cis female adult students whose education was interrupted by pregnancy and are now continuing their education as returning adult students. As such, the purpose of this research is to advance knowledge about the lived experiences of teenage mothers as non-traditional students. Their unique accounts of their lived experiences could advance an in-depth understanding of their

motivation for continuing their education, the ways in which they are navigating AET as second-chance learners, and the challenges they experience as returning adult students.

3.3   Research questions and objectives

This study aimed to answer the following research question:

What are the lived experiences of teenage mothers, whose education has been interrupted by pregnancy, as adult students?

The three sub-questions that guided the data collection were:

1.   What motivated the continuation of their education through AET?

2.   How are these women navigating AET as second-chance learners?

3.   What are the challenges they experience as adult learners?

The primary objective of this study was to advance in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences as adult students. It was also to explore these women's motivation for continuing their education, the ways in which they are navigating AET as second-chance learners, and the challenges they face as returning adult students.

3.4   Research population and sample

This study's target population was cis female South African adults whose formal school education was interrupted by adolescent pregnancy and motherhood. The sample population was delimited to women who were enrolled in the adult education and training (AET) programme at a community learning centre (CLC) in the Western Cape province of South Africa.

The aim of qualitative research is to capture unique lived experiences, and not to generalise its findings. According to Malterud et al. (2016), a study that involves an in-depth examination of personal narratives or discourse details would require carefully selected participants for adequate information-rich power. The inclusion criteria for participation in this study were

limited to cis female South African women whose formal schooling was interrupted by pregnancy and motherhood and who were enrolled in the AET programme. Five cis female adult students who met the inclusion criteria were selected purposefully.

Purposive sampling refers to the deliberate and specific selection of a participant based on elements that contain the most characteristic, representative, or typical attributes of the population that serves the purpose of the study (De Vos et al., 2011; Etikan et al., 2016). The recruitment of participants started at a CLC in the Metro East Education District (MEED). The CLC manager was contacted and asked to assist in recruiting potential participants by distributing a letter to all female students inviting them to attend an initial information session. The letter listed the participant criteria and clearly stipulated the joint nature of the information session, thereby indicating that the identities of those who decided to attend the information session would be revealed to the other attendees. As stated in the invitation letter, by attending the information session, attendees had to agree to treat any information that was gained through the attendance of others that may identify them as strictly confidential. The researcher explained the research study, the data collection process, and informed consent at this gathering. Potential participants had an opportunity to ask questions during the information session, after which they were invited to sign the consent forms and agreed to a time and date for their individual interviews. Individual interviews and the focus group session were conducted at the respective CLCs with permission from the CLC manager.

The participants in this study comprised five cis female adult students whose primary or high school education was interrupted by teenage pregnancy and motherhood, and who were enrolled in the adult education and training (AET) programme at a community learning centre.

3.5   The research design

3.5.1   Paradigm

A comprehensive and meticulous investigation of participants' realities and lived experiences called for a qualitative research design situated in a social constructivist approach (Daniels, 2020; Kim, 2014). The paradigm of choice was social constructivism, as it observes the construction of meaning within the historical, cultural, and social spheres of understanding human experience (Kim, 2014). The educational experiences that the study sought to explore were inextricably linked to and deeply rooted in the personal and social histories that had shaped the participants' realities. Social constructivism considers qualitative research to be a process of learning through the researcher's active participation in the formation of meaning (Kim, 2014; Schwandt, 1994).

The research was conceptualised as a qualitative study. Queirós et al. (2017) describe qualitative research as the methodology through which multiple dimensions of lived realities and the intricate dynamics of social relationships can be understood. The objective of qualitative research is to identify and make sense of patterns among words to formulate a meaningful picture without sacrificing the depth and complexity of the information. Where quantitative research regards human sense and subjectivity to be undesirable biases, these elements are foundational in adding to the dimension and dynamic of human experience in qualitative research (Leung, 2015).

3.5.2   Narrative inquiry

The design of the study is narrative inquiry, which is a design that stems from the epistemological assumption that people unravel lived experiences through story structures (Bell, 2002). Foundational to narrative inquiry is the epistemological premise that human beings impose story frameworks to make sense of seemingly random experiences. In other

words, people choose the elements of experience to which they will pay attention, and they shape those elements in ways that mirror the narratives that are available to them (Bell, 2002). Narratives are representations and interpretations of experience that are not constrained by a need for evidence to prove their veracity (Muylaert et al., 2014). A narrative connects events in both time and meaning, going beyond a mere listing of events (Riessman, 2008).

Advantages of narrative inquiry pertain to the ease with which individuals are willing to share their stories, the thick descriptions that the process of narrative inquiry invites, the self-reflection that storytelling evokes, and the honesty that is typically ingrained in people's narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). The limitations of narrative inquiry that these sources point out relate to the complexity of the interpretation of individual stories. Difficulties pertaining to the relationship between the narrative account, the interpretation, and the reported narrative are also stated by Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007). Bell (2002) cautions that, due to the construction of truth and the subjectivity of the researcher, stories are by their very nature complex and ambiguous.

3.5.3   Data collection methods

I used two methods of data collection, namely narrative interviews, and focus group interviews.

3.5.3.1   Narrative interviews

The primary method for creating the participants' stories was individual narrative interviews in conjunction with semi-structured procedures. Narrative methods may be combined with semi-structured interview techniques in which the researcher creates a topic guide, as opposed to lines of inquiry, which allow for broader areas of interest (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016). Such areas might be aligned with a specific focus of interest identified from the literature, or from previous interviews. The interviewer must be able to mentally record any information they intend to follow up on later during the narrative interview (Riessman, 2008). In narrative

interviews, the researcher relinquishes control of the content, direction, and pace of the interview to the interviewee. Furthermore, as there is no predetermined objective, it allows the interviewer access to rich descriptions of experiences that can be interpreted considering the initiated conversation (Muylaert et al., 2014; Riessman, 1993).

Kallio et al. (2016) emphasise the versatility and flexibility of semi-structured interviews as a popular method for gathering data and describe its effectiveness in promoting reciprocity between the interviewer and participant. A strength of this method is that it allows the interviewer to improvise follow-up questions based on participant responses and leaves space for participants' individual verbal expressions.

Each interview commenced with an introduction and explanation of the research to encourage initial conversation. After confirming the right to audio-record the interview, I started the interview as guided by the themes that I identified in the interview guide. The interview guide enveloped the main themes of this study and offered a focused framework for the conversation, without requiring rigorous adherence. Instead, the goal was to explore the main research question by gathering similar information from each participant by offering guidance on what themes to focus on during the session (Kallio et al., 2016). During the interviews, I posed preliminary questions to collect demographic information on the participant's educational history. Their thoughts, feelings, and experiences pertaining to education as teenage students were tapped into. From there, the conversation moved to the circumstances that led the participant to leave school and the dynamics surrounding that decision. The focus of the interview moved to the participant's current life as an adult student amid other roles and responsibilities. Participants were asked about their household responsibilities, their decision to continue their educational journey through AET, the challenges they experienced as an adult student, and their hopes for the future. I used the participant's own words to fill in any blanks or to elicit further information about a topic of interest through active listening. The interview guide allowed me to guide the conversations in a gentle manner to ensure the richness and

relevance of the gathered information. Some participants spoke freely and openly, without needing much guidance, while others required more direction.

3.5.3.2   Focus group session

After a preliminary analysis of the interviews, I attempted to schedule a single focus group session with all five participants. Focus group sessions are group interviews that aim to elicit an understanding of people's thoughts and feelings related to a particular phenomenon (De Vos et al., 2011). The focus group session included a collective activity to gather data about teenage mothers' shared educational experiences and the meanings that underlie such experiences. The activity's purpose was also to validate the interview data on their pre-adult educational experiences (Gill et al., 2008).

The 'River of Life' is an autobiographical mapping tool that was introduced in this focus group setting as a collective activity. This technique offers participants the freedom to express themselves in a variety of ways and outside the linguistic boundaries of narrative inquiry, considering the complex dynamics of these women's experiences. Denov and Shevell (2021) note that participants often struggle to find the words to communicate their experiences and point out the ways in which the visual representation of this technique engages participants in a meaningful, reflective, and collective experience.

There were multiple factors that contributed to the immense challenge of attempting to arrange this focus group session. These factors are discussed in Chapter 4. As an alternative means of data collection, participants were given instructions over the phone via a voice call and text. The instructions invited participants to draw their life's journey as a river, illustrating key events and experiences along their educational trajectories. Participants were given the freedom to draw in accordance with their own standards and to include aspects they considered relevant and meaningful, much as in narrative interviews. Changes in the width of the river were suggested to be used to symbolise changes in the breadth or concentration of emphasis or

activity at different periods, while bends in the river's course were suggested to be used to represent turning moments in life. The interactive and participatory nature of this technique would have made it possible to involve the pertinent parties and consider several ways of framing their individual and shared experiences (Denov & Shevell, 2021). However, participants were eventually asked to discuss their completed works over the phone once they had completed them.

3.5.4 Data management

The in-person narrative interviews took place in a private classroom at the respective CLCs with permission from the CLC manager.

Although the theft of storage devices and loss of data are possible, the audio recordings, transcripts, and related documents were saved in an encrypted folder on a password-protected computer and will be stored for a minimum period of ten years. Hard copies of the signed consent forms and other documents and records linked to the ethical conduct of research were stored by the principal investigator in a safe and secure manner according to the guidelines of the Department of Health for research ethics.

Data were backed up on a OneDrive account created specifically for this research project. This happened automatically as new work was saved. Any paper data that was collected was stored in a file and locked in a filing cabinet in the researcher's home. The key was kept hidden in a location known only to the researcher. The printed data was anonymised. Only the researcher and her supervisor had access to the data.

3.5.5 Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves the systematic examination and interpretation of non-numerical data to derive meaning and understanding from complex phenomena. Qualitative data analysis encompasses three interrelated dimensions: data reduction, data display, and

conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). Data reduction involves the process of organising, condensing, and categorising raw data to identify patterns and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Data display entails the visual representation of data, such as through diagrams or charts, to facilitate analysis and interpretation. Lastly, conclusion drawing involves the researcher's interpretation and synthesis of the findings to generate meaningful insights and draw conclusions (Saldaña, 2021). These three dimensions are intertwined and iterative, with the researcher constantly moving between them to make sense of the qualitative data. The process of qualitative data analysis is dynamic and requires the researcher to engage in reflexive and critical thinking to ensure meaningful interpretations of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Bazeley (2009) emphasises the importance of rigor and transparency in qualitative data analysis to ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the findings.

Anderson and Kirkpatrick (2016) emphasise the importance of retaining the richness of the accounts during the analysis process. Riessman's model (Riessman, 2008) posits that narratives are unclear and partial accounts of people's experiences. She draws attention to how researchers frame the narrative when conducting the interview and carrying out the analysis. The researcher is thus advised to focus on the events as they are described, the structure of the narrative, and the meanings the narrator assigns to them. Language qualities such as tone of voice, pauses, changes in intonation, silence that can be changed into unheard narratives, expressions, etc. are included in this process, since narrative analysis examines both what is said and how it is delivered (Muylaert et al., 2014).

The individual narrative interviews and discussions of the autobiographical mapping tool were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcribed data were organised and categorised to uncover potential themes. Thematic analysis was used in the exploration of narrative interview data to identify and explore stories across the dataset. The process of qualitative data analysis is highly subjective and requires the researcher to actively engage with the data to uncover patterns, themes, and meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Sections

that encapsulated similar aspects were grouped together for analysis and explored thoroughly through the lens of the relevant literature in an attempt to produce meaningful interpretations (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016).

3.5.6 *Trustworthiness and credibility of the study*

Trustworthiness describes the level of confidence in the data and its interpretation, as well in as the methodology used to guarantee the accuracy of the findings (Connelly, 2016). Trustworthiness is further divided into credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, the most important of which is credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2014). Credibility, according to Connelly (2016), is belief in the accuracy of the study.

This study employed a meticulously selected research strategy that was supported by a thorough review of the relevant literature to enable a reliable interpretation of its results.

3.6   Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations of the study were significant and central throughout the process of inquiry. These considerations necessitated consistent care, review, and mitigation of the research decisions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). Procedural ethics and ethics in practice (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) were discussed in Chapter 1. Matters of privacy, confidentiality, informed consent, and participant withdrawal are discussed below.

Confidentiality in qualitative research refers to the protection of the privacy of research participants and their data (De Vos et al., 2011; Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). Carefully selected measures were employed to ensure confidentiality. As per example, all names, places, and identifying features were anonymised through the assignment of pseudonyms. As stated earlier, audio-recordings, as well as transcriptions thereof, were stored on a password-protected computer accessible only to the researcher. All transcriptions of audio-recordings were done by the researcher and will be stored for a minimum period of ten years, after which

they will be destroyed. Audio-recordings were destroyed once fully transcribed. Access to audio-recordings, transcriptions, and other relevant data was only by the researcher, and with permission, to the supervisor. Audio-recordings, transcriptions, and other data were backed up on the university's OneDrive platform.

Informed consent in qualitative research refers to the process of obtaining voluntary, informed, and explicit agreement from research participants to participate in a study (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The researcher approached the matter of informed consent with an initial information session that included a question-and-answer section. The research process was explained to the participants and they were encouraged to ask questions and/or raise any concerns they might have. Written informed consent forms were made available to potential participants to take home for their own personal reference. Consent forms were made available in English and Afrikaans. At the start of each interview, I made each participant aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without fear of being penalised. Participants were interviewed at a time and date that was convenient for them, and interviews were kept to no more than 60 minutes to ensure that their time was valued and respected.

Participants were reminded of their right to I withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason or face any repercussions. Participants were also informed of their right to not answer questions without having to explain their actions. Each participant was expected to treat any information shared during the focus group session, including information that may identify the other participants, as strictly confidential; this was stipulated in the individual consent form.

Participants were referred to Hope House Counselling Centre if they wished to explore and discuss their experiences and perceptions further with a counsellor.

3.7 Summary

In this chapter I introduced, explained, and defended the considerations and subsequent decisions pertaining to my research design and methodology. Understanding the lived experiences and subsequent narratives of teenage mothers who have returned to school as adult students facilitated an understanding of how these experiences are integrated into the adult learning context and how to foster and maintain long-term motivation for participation. A qualitative research design embedded in a social constructivism paradigm allowed for the construction of meaning within the historical, cultural, and social spheres of understanding so as to interpret the lived experiences of the participants (Daniels, 2020; Kim, 2014). Through narrative, inquiry five participants' stories of how they navigated adult education as second-chance learners were captured. The data collection tools were individual semi-structured interviews and a focus group session. The latter was facilitated by the autobiographical mapping tool, the 'River of Life' activity.

The ethical considerations of the study were integral to the integrity of the explorative process. These considerations were carefully and consistently reviewed and reflected on throughout the research process.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1   Introduction

This chapter introduces the reader to the themes that emerged from the rigorous analysis of the gathered data. The systematic and meticulous nature of qualitative data analysis allows for extensive, rich, and detailed descriptions of meanings in the presentation of the findings (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The purpose of this study was to advance knowledge about the lived experiences of five teenage mothers as returning adult education students. The study aimed to present the unique narratives of their motivations for continuing their education, the ways in which they were navigating AET as second-chance learners, and the challenges they experienced as returning adult students.

Narrative inquiry was selected as the design of this study because it is based on the epistemological premise that people process their lived experiences through story structures. Story structures connect events in both time and meaning and are representations and interpretations of experience that surpass mere recollections of occurrences (Bell, 2002; Muylaert et al., 2014).

4.2   The research context

The five participants were selected from two community learning centres (CLC) in the Western Cape: Kraaifontein Community Learning Centre and Bethany Educentre in Claremont. The five participants were purposively selected as fitting the profile of cis female South African women whose primary or high school education was interrupted by teenage pregnancy, and who were continuing their formal education through the Adult Education and Training (AET) programme.

Arranging individual interviews with the participants posed significant logistical challenges, which I attributed to the adversities that women of limited means encounter while navigating seemingly simple daily tasks, such as getting to the CLC to participate in their continuing education. The AET evening classes were on Mondays through Thursdays from 18:00 until 19:00 at the respective learning centres. Jolene and Laticia took a taxi directly from work to class, while the unemployed Gabby and Cindy travelled from home to the centre. Sasha had her own transport. Jolene, Laticia, Gabby, and Cindy encountered difficulties stemming from the expensive and unreliable public taxi transport system, leading to complexities in scheduling interviews and resulting in delays in data collection. This challenge is not unique to their situations; it commonly leads adult learners to experience frequent class absences or irregular attendance. Moreover, arranging interview times presented an obstacle, as most participants were only available after their evening classes. However, a further challenge arose from the fact that the areas hosting the CLCs became sparsely populated and unsafe after class hours. To address this, the CLC managers cooperated by extending their operating hours by an additional hour after evening classes, enabling the interviews with participants to be conducted effectively.

Communication with the participants was impeded by additional challenges, including limited access to cell phones and data connectivity. Of the five participants, only three had their own cell phones. Regrettably, two of these three participants lacked access to cell phone data, which made it difficult to communicate with them and coordinate interview arrangements effectively. Interviews had to be rescheduled several times due to instances where participants failed to attend classes or attend scheduled meetings.

I share their situational challenge to provide insights into the unpredictability of the participants' worlds, and how it led to changes in their educational prospects. Cindy, one of the participants, dropped out of the AET programme shortly after our interview and ignored my attempts at communication. Jolene and Gabby stopped responding to my messages after our interviews.

After numerous attempts to set up the focus group session with all five women, I decided to go ahead with the two who were available. These two participants completed the 'River of Life' drawing and took pictures of their drawings with their cell phones and sent it to me over WhatsApp. This was followed by a telephonic discussion.

I share my experience of the logistical challenges and inconveniences to reschedule the personal interviews and the focus group session to both acknowledge and give recognition to the personal and situational challenges that infiltrate these participants' daily lives.

4.3   The research participants

The research participants of this study were five cis women: Jolene, Gabby, Cindy, Laticia, and Sasha, who all became pregnant as teenagers and subsequently discontinued their formal schooling. Their biographical information is provided in Table 1. The names of the participants are pseudonyms.

Table 1: Biographical information

Participant	Age	Number of children	Marital status	Employment status	Household
Jolene	40	3	Married	Full-time assistant at an ECD centre	Husband, 3 children, and parents
Gabby	35	2	Married	Unemployed	Husband and 2 children
Cindy	18	1	Single	Unemployed	Parents, sister, brother, and child
Laticia	22	2	Domestic partnership	Full-time flower packer	Boyfriend, 2 children, and boyfriend's mother
Sasha	45	1	Divorced; in a new relationship	Full-time administrator	Adult daughter

At the time of this study, all five participants were enrolled in the Adult Education and Training (AET) programme, seeking to complete their formal education. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 45 years.

Jolene lives with her husband, three children, and parents. Alongside her familial commitments, she is a full-time assistant at an Early Childhood Development Centre. Gabby's household consists of her husband and two children. She is unemployed. Cindy lives with her parents, sister, brother, and child, and is unemployed. Laticia shares her living space with her long-term partner, two children, and her partner's mother. She works full-time as a flower packer at a neighbouring farm. Sasha, divorced and in a new relationship, lives with her 28-year-old adult daughter. Notably, Sasha's distinct circumstance exempts her from childcare responsibilities, as she holds a full-time administrative position. These varied family and household dynamics play a pivotal role in shaping the participants' choices and experiences in pursuing education amidst multiple responsibilities and challenges. To provide insights into where they are in their educational journey, I include Table 2 to illustrate the participants' historical and present educational backgrounds.

Table 2: Information on continued education

Participant	Age at pregnancy	Current age	Last grade completed before dropping out	Current grade level
Jolene	17	40	Grade 12	Grade 12
Gabby	18	35	Grade 12	Grade 12
Cindy	13	18	Grade 6	Grade 9
Laticia	14	22	Grade 7	Grade 11
Sasha	16	45	Grade 11	Grade 12

4.4   Presentation of the themes and sub-themes

This study aimed to answer the following primary research question: What are the lived experiences of teenage mothers who have had their education interrupted by pregnancy when returning to school as adult students?

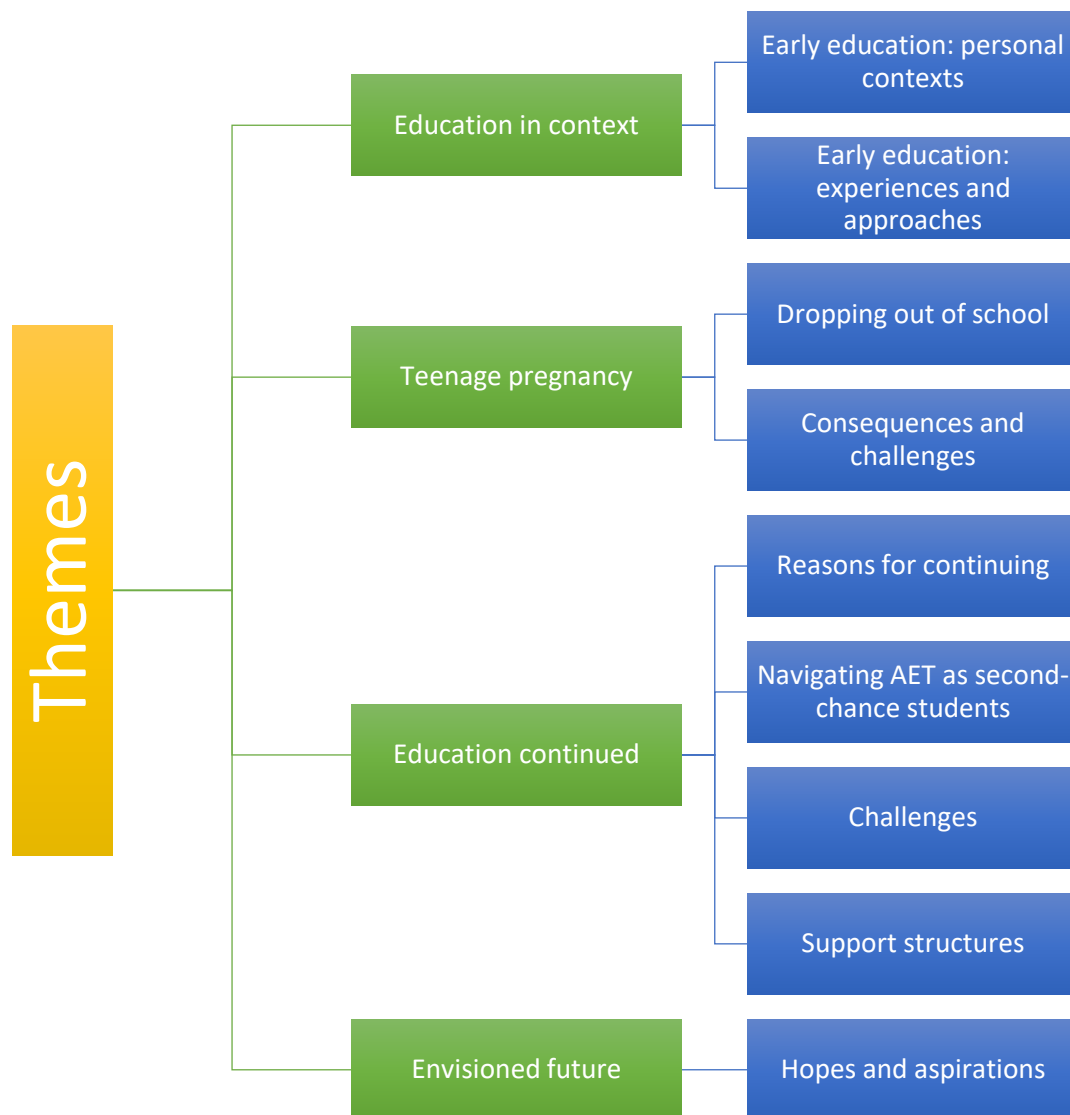The data analysis revealed the following main themes and sub-themes:

Figure 1: Themes and sub-themes

The next section contains a thorough analysis of the data for each identified theme.

4.4.1   Education in context

The historical context of participants' early education, specifically their educational experiences prior to discontinuing formal schooling, assumes significance as it lends context to this study. During the interviews, the participants were asked about their home support systems as well as to describe their encounters with and approaches to their primary and/or high school education during their teenage years. This line of inquiry aimed to elucidate the intricate personal contexts that influenced their educational trajectories.

4.4.1.1   Early education: personal contexts

The participants' personal contexts during their early education are provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Personal contexts of participants

Participant	Personal context	Codes
Jolene	*Both my parents raised me. I lost my two brothers to gang violence and my sister also passed on when I was a teenager. I grew up with a lot of violence.*	Loss Violence
Gabby	*I was raised by a single mother and no siblings. I didn't have much support from her. I never felt good enough.*	Familial dynamics Lack of support
Laticia	*My mom suffered from severe depression … I was triggered by the fact that my mom couldn't support me, and my dad only provided financial support.*	Mental health Familial dynamics Lack of support
Cindy	*I was raised by my paternal grandmother's sister 'cause both my parents are deaf. My mom raised me until I was 2 months old, but I was raised by my grandmother's sister until I was 11. Then I went to go live with my mother again after I turned 11.*	Familial dynamics Family structure

Sasha	*I grew up with both parents. I had a good upbringing. No disruptions … [My mother] also fell pregnant at a young age. My daughter is the only person to break the generational cycle.*	Familial dynamics

Jolene's upbringing was marked by profound loss and pervasive violence, with the tragic deaths of her siblings during her formative years. Her description of her context calls attention to the impact of a violent environment on her sense of security and well-being. Gabby, who was raised by a single mother, felt unsupported and inadequate. This theme of inadequacy resonates as a central emotional experience that influenced her teenage years, potentially shaping her perceptions of herself and her capabilities. Laticia's account highlights the challenges of navigating familial dynamics affected by mental health issues. Her mother's depression, coupled with limited support from her father, illustrates a complex interplay between family circumstances and her educational journey. Cindy's unique family structure, with her parents being deaf and her upbringing shifting between her mother and her grandmother's sister, showcases the resilience required to adapt to changing familial contexts. Her story illuminates the dynamics of support and adaptation within unconventional family setups. Sasha's family background differs greatly from the others, as it is characterised by stability and positive family dynamics. Her narrative introduces a counterpoint, emphasising the transformative role of familial stability and support in breaking generational cycles.

These shared themes of loss, inadequate support, mental health challenges, resilience in unconventional family setups, and the transformative power of stability collectively provide a nuanced understanding of the participants' personal contexts during their teenage education years. These intricate personal contexts appeared to have played an influential role in shaping their attitudes, decisions, and experiences during their formative years.

4.4.1.2   Early education: experiences and approaches

The participants' reflections on their early education experiences as teenagers reveal recurring themes that offer insights into their pathways and challenges. Their reflections are provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Reflections on early education as teenagers

Participant	Early education	Codes
Jolene	*I pretended to go to school and made friends. I made some bad choices … Started smoking cigarettes, smoking weed, drinking, and then moved over to hardcore drugs. It just got worse. When you bunk school, your life changes.*	Peer interactions/influences Drugs Absenteeism
Gabby	*I was a very attentive scholar; I made some bad decisions as I teenager and I ended up pregnant and feeling like a failure.*	Commitment Choices/actions
Laticia	*I was very naughty, and I did my own thing. I was also very quiet, and I'd describe myself as a quiet troublemaker. I was an easy-going person, so I made a lot of friends. I ended up mixing with the wrong crowd. Doing drugs, getting in trouble, breaking rules … to be in with them.*	Choices/actions Peer interactions/influences Drugs
Cindy	*I was very reserved, but I loved doing my work. I had the wrong friends and started doing the wrong things.*	Peer interactions/influences
Sasha	*I got good grades in school, I took it seriously, so much so that I didn't write my finals in grade 11. My marks throughout the year were good enough, so I passed.*	Commitment

I didn't even think about boyfriends. I wanted to finish school and enjoy that part of my life. I wasn't involved with the	Focus
wrong people or the wrong things or	Peer interactions/influences
anything. I didn't expect things to	Unexpected
change so drastically [referring to her pregnancy].	

The pervasive influence of peer interactions on their academic paths was shared by all five participants. Across the narratives, there is a recurring recognition of the influence of unfavourable peer associations on decision-making processes and behaviour choices during their teenage years. This shared theme reflects the considerable role that social circles play in shaping educational experiences. Furthermore, the participants' stories collectively highlight the role of unexpected life events in altering their educational journeys. While each narrative unfolds differently, a shared recognition of the disruptive potential of unexpected circumstances, such as teenage pregnancy, is evident.

Individual reflections also reveal the unique circumstances that contributed to the participants' early education experiences. These individual circumstances encompass factors such as personal determination, family support, and shifting priorities. While Jolene's account illustrates the transformative impact of absenteeism and negative behaviours, Gabby's narrative emphasises the emotional toll of unanticipated life events on her self-perception. Laticia's story brings to light the nuanced influence of peer interactions on behaviour choices, while Cindy's recollections highlight the balancing act between personal ambitions and external pressures. Sasha's distinct narrative showcases steadfast commitment to education amidst unexpected challenges.

These narratives collectively draw attention to the complex interplay between personal agency, peer dynamics, and unexpected life events in shaping the participants' early education

experiences. The themes of peer influence, unexpected life events, and shifts in personal priorities shed light on the multifaceted nature of educational trajectories during adolescence.

4.4.2   Teenage pregnancy and its consequences for educational continuity

This theme explores the participants' experiences of teenage pregnancy and their subsequent decision to leave school before completing their compulsory formal schooling. The women's reasons for leaving school after falling pregnant are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Teenage pregnancy and exit from formal schooling

Participant	Age at school dropout	Grade at school dropout	Reasons for leaving school	Codes
Jolene	17	12	*I didn't see the point and now I was going to be a mother. I can't blame anyone but me as I actively made the choice. It (school) wasn't a priority.*	Lack of priority Changing roles Accountability
Gabby	18	12	*I was ashamed to return after my pregnancy. We didn't have the option of returning to school after giving birth like today's kids.*	Shame No choice/options
Cindy	13	6	*I didn't want to go back. Now I needed to look after my child.*	Choice Changing roles
Laticia	14	7	*My mom just didn't enrol me into school again, and I blame her for not doing that, even though I was hesitant to go back to*	Lack of support

			school because I felt like a failure.	Feelings of failure
Sasha	16	11	*The teachers came to our house saying that I could finish school and that they'd support me, but I decided against it as I didn't want to disappoint my dad any further. I decided that I needed to break free and got married.*	Support Family dynamics Familial expectations Choice

4.4.2.1   Dropping out of school

The participants' reasons for dropping out of school reflect the complexities of their unique circumstances. While teenage pregnancy appears to be the primary reason for school dropout, it is crucial to acknowledge the underlying complexities brought on by systemic barriers and societal challenges that compromised the participants' foundations for investing in their education prior to them falling pregnant.

Jolene, Gabby, and Sasha fell pregnant during the senior phase of their high school education. An examination of Jolene's account reveals her association with an unfavourable peer group, leading to a shift in her priorities from education to social interactions. Despite being in her final year of high school, she lost interest in schooling. She started skipping class and admits to making unfavourable choices. She states:

> I pretended to go to school. I made some bad choices … Started smoking cigarettes, smoking weed, drinking, and then moved over to hardcore drugs. When you bunk school, your life changes.

Upon falling pregnant, the prospect of continuing her studies ceased to hold significance for her. Likewise, Gabby, also in the matriculation phase, refrained from returning to school and

completing her formal education after her pregnancy. Her reluctance stemmed from a sense of shame, and she felt that she did not have the option to return to school following the birth of her child.

The 16-year-old Sasha was in Grade 11 when she became pregnant. Her narrative depicts a dedicated student who exhibited satisfactory academic performance before her pregnancy.

> I got good grades in school, I took it seriously, so much so that I didn't write my finals in grade 11. My marks throughout the year were good enough, so I passed. I wasn't involved with the wrong people or the wrong things or anything. I didn't expect things to change so drastically [referring to her pregnancy].

Despite receiving support and encouragement from her teachers to pursue her education following the birth of her child, Sasha opted for a different path by choosing marriage. The disappointment expressed by Sasha's father played a role in influencing her decision to forego returning to school.

Cindy and Laticia, both of whom were primary school students at the time of their pregnancies, offered limited details of the circumstances surrounding their pregnancies. Their stories, however, reflect disorganised family life with limited support. Cindy, who was 13 and pregnant, attributed her discontinuation of education primarily to impending childcare responsibilities. Meanwhile Laticia, aged 14, experienced a lack of parental backing and encouragement to continue her education. The choice by Laticia's mother not to re-enrol her in school after childbirth further exacerbated her sense of self-doubt in her academic capabilities.

4.4.2.2   Consequences and challenges

The participants' narratives depict the emotional impact of teenage pregnancy, revealing that fear, shame, and guilt permeated their experiences. Furthermore, the data illustrate how these

pregnancies strained familial relationships, leading to feelings of isolation among the participants.

Gabby's pregnancy prompted a perception of unsupportiveness from her mother, also a single parent. She described it as follows:

> I spoke to my mother …, but she wasn't very supportive. I don't get positive affirmations from my mother to push me.

Laticia confronted substantial challenges stemming from her mother's severe mental illness, which had both practical and emotional implications. Amid her mother's battle with severe depression, Laticia experienced a lack of maternal support. While her father played a role in providing financial upkeep, his involvement was restricted to this aspect. Laticia's narrative reflects the degradation of her home environment upon becoming pregnant, resulting in her decision to discontinue her schooling.

> I stopped going to school as everything began falling apart when I fell pregnant. I was triggered by the fact that my mom couldn't support me, and my dad only provided financial support.

Despite her hesitation to return to school due to feelings of inadequacy, she recalls blaming her mother for the decision not to enrol her back in school after her pregnancy.

Sasha's decision to discontinue her education appears to have been shaped significantly by her father's disappointment and accompanying sense of embarrassment.

> My parents found out and my dad was very distraught to the extent that he didn't want me to leave the house because my pregnancy was shameful.

She decided not to return to school after the pregnancy as "I didn't want to disappoint my dad any further".

Teenage pregnancy was both an interruption in and a disruption of the participants' education. Jolene, Gabby, Laticia, and Cindy reported some form of disruption to their education prior to falling pregnant. These disruptions were contextual and related to social group dynamics, a perceived lack of responsibility, and a series of subsequent decisions and actions. Despite teenage pregnancy being the main reason for them dropping out of school, these prior disruptions appear to have weakened the foundation of their sense of priority when it came to their school attendance.

Practical implications of teenage pregnancy include limited or, in many cases, a complete lack of access to alternative options and support networks. The emotional, social, and practical consequences and challenges of teenage pregnancy appear to have exacerbated the disorienting nature participants' circumstances, thereby increasing the difficulty with which they have had to navigate their new roles and future prospects. This challenging environment plays a crucial role in shaping the decisions these young women make regarding their education in the face of teenage pregnancies. The scarcity of accessible resources and guidance influences their considerations to either discontinue their studies or persevere amidst adversity. The constraints imposed by their circumstances contribute to the complex interplay of factors that ultimately contribute to the trajectories of their educational journeys.

4.4.3   Education continued

In this section I present the data on the participants' reasons for returning to and continuing with their education through AET and explore their ways of navigating their roles and responsibilities.

4.4.3.1   Reasons for continuing education

My analysis of the narratives on why they continued their education is summarised in Table 6.

Table 6: The role of motherhood in their decisions to return to formal education

Participant	Age	AET grade	Reasons for continuing their education	Codes
Jolene	40	12	*I realised that I had to make the choice to take the first step. You know, as a mother, so that I can give my kids a better life.*	Motherhood Better life/future
Gabby	35	12	*I went back as I had an urge to complete it. I needed to set an example for my kids. My motivators are my kids. I want to be able to say that I managed to achieve something.*	Set an example Self-achievement
Cindy	18	9	*I wanted to give my child a better life. I'm hoping to get a good job with a good salary to buy a house for my son and I. I don't want my child to be raised by other people.*	Better life/future Job prospects Family structure
Laticia	22	11	*I had to step up as a mother. I realised that most jobs required matric. I wanted to do this to better our lives. I want to prove that I can do this. I need to make myself proud knowing that I did this despite the obstacles.*	Motherhood Responsibility Better life/future Self-achievement Resiliency
Sasha	45	12	*I don't have a carrot being dangled which makes it even more worthwhile. Whatever is next will be great. My reason for doing it is self-development.*	Intrinsic motivation Self-achievement

My analysis of the data revealed a multifaceted array of reasons for continuing their education. However, the common thread that binds these women's narratives is the pivotal role of motherhood, and what their completed high school education could mean for their families.

Jolene's reason was rooted in her maternal role and driven by the aspiration to provide her children with improved opportunities and a better life. She recognised that taking the initiative to further her education was pivotal in achieving this goal. Similarly, Gabby's decision to return to school stemmed from a strong desire to set an example for her children. She wanted to demonstrate her accomplishments to her children and instil the value of achievement in them.

Laticia's reasons were intertwined with her role as a mother, as she recognised that obtaining her matriculation qualification could lead to better employment prospects, thereby enhancing the quality of life for her family. Her determination to overcome obstacles and prove her capabilities underscored her commitment to personal and family advancement through education. Cindy's motivation was deeply rooted in her aspiration to secure a better future for her child. She aimed to obtain a well-paying job, enabling her to provide for her son and prevent his upbringing by others. Her determination to establish a stable home for her child drove her educational pursuit.

Sasha's rationale depicted a distinct perspective, as she highlighted the absence of external incentives or tangible rewards driving her decision. Her focus on self-development indicated a personal drive to enhance her skills, knowledge, and personal growth through education. Sasha's motivation appeared to emerge from an intrinsic desire to better herself without a specific external 'carrot' prompting her actions. Her pursuit of education was intrinsically motivated and driven by personal fulfilment and the desire to achieve her academic goals.

While individual motivations varied, a shared theme across the participants was the recognition of education as a pathway to improved circumstances and opportunities, not only for themselves, but also for their families. Motherhood emerged as a strong catalyst, propelling the participants towards education as a means to secure better futures for their children. This collective aspiration for personal growth and family well-being underscored the participants'

determination to overcome challenges and persevere in their educational journey as adult students.

4.4.3.2   Navigating AET as a second-chance student

The participants were asked about the ways in which they navigate the intricate webs of responsibilities, commitments, sacrifices, and challenges in their pursuit of continued part-time education through the Adult Education and Training programme.

Jolene, a mother of three, adheres to a meticulously structured routine. Rising at 04:30, she tends to her children and departs by 05:30 for her full-time job as an educational assistant at a neighbouring ECD centre, returning at approximately 17:00. Despite her packed schedule, she attends evening classes from 18:00 to 19:00 and participates in church activities.

Laticia, employed full-time on a flower farm, balances her work schedule with childcare duties. Starting her day at 05:30, she ensures her children are prepared for school before commencing her job. Upon finishing work, she collects one child from school, prepares dinner, and, on class days, heads directly to her studies. Laticia's determination to succeed is evident in her efficient use of lunch breaks for studying and her consistent dedication to her educational pursuits.

Gabby, who lives with her husband and children, recently left her full-time job to focus on her education. Her daily routine involves caring for her children, managing household chores, and working on her studies.

Cindy, who is the youngest participant, at 18 years of age, resides with her parents, siblings, and son. Her brother is also in the AET programme. Cindy manages her son's care and shares in some of the household tasks

Laticia is a mother of two living with her partner and his mother but finds it challenging to manage full-time employment and education. She shared that she uses her lunch breaks to study. She also invests time in her coursework at night after her household chores are done.

Sasha is also in full-time employment. However, as the mother of an adult daughter, she is in the unique position of being without childcare obligations. Sasha seems to be efficiently balancing her demanding work schedule with her studies.

4.4.3.3 Challenges

The participants' challenges while navigating AET as returning adult students, amid their multiple other roles and responsibilities, are depicted in Table 7.

Table 7: Challenges experienced while navigating AET as returning adult students

Participant	Challenges faced	Code
Jolene	*… I don't think I can do it … I failed two modules.*	Failure
	Sometimes the kids are a lot, or I need to do	Family responsibilities
	something at home, or I'm tired, or…you know.	Home chores
		Exhaustion
		No time
Gabby	*Sometimes I have too much on my plate …*	Responsibilities
	sometimes there is no time.	Time constraints
	It's a lot more work when you're a mother and a	Family responsibilities
	wife.	
	I'd take a taxi to attend school, but it's not always	Unreliable public transport
	reliable.	
	The loadshedding makes things a little difficult as	Loadshedding
	the wi-fi will be off when there's no power.	No internet access
Laticia	*It was hectic, juggling all of it.*	Multiple responsibilities
	You know, I would have to use my children's	Financial constraints to
	SASSA grant money for taxi fare. How else am I	subsidising education
	going to get to school?	Transportation/money
	My biggest challenge is attending classes.	

Cindy	*Juggling raising my child and having to attend school.*	Multiple responsibilities
	We don't always have a lift and sometimes my brother can't take me …	Transportation
Sasha	*The adult brain has so much more experience to draw from, as you're not that young naïve person anymore.*	Age
	I'm disciplined and I'm a bit of an OCD freak so small things get to me.	Lacks confidence/ Questions her competence

The challenges encountered by each participant in navigating formal schooling as returning adult students reveal multifaceted and distinctive obstacles. These challenges are coded in the right-hand column above.

Among these challenges is the intricate balancing act necessitated by multiple responsibilities, encompassing both familial and educational obligations. Jolene and Cindy, for instance, navigate the demanding dual roles of motherhood and being a student, demonstrating the pervasive challenge of harmonising familial duties with scholarly pursuits. Time constraints emerge as a common challenge for Gabby and Laticia. Their narratives reflect time constraints arising from their multifaceted roles as mothers and students, and in the case of Jolene, Laticia, and Sasha, as employees. This shared challenge echoes the intricate navigation required to allocate time effectively to family, studies, and work.

Transportation-related challenges also arise, with the lack of reliable and affordable public transport affecting Gabby, Laticia, and Cindy. Their narratives emphasise the complexities they face in accessing educational institutions. Financial constraints manifest as a pervasive challenge, particularly in Laticia's personal accounts. Her reliance on the government grant to fund her transportation expenses to the learning centre illustrates the economic barriers that returning adult students may encounter that hinder their access to education, regardless of whether the tuition is free of charge.

The issue of load-shedding and its subsequent disruption of internet connectivity, as mentioned by Gabby, further compounds the challenges faced by these individuals. Such unforeseen external factors exacerbate the intricacies of pursuing education as adult students. The significance of age and its influence on educational experience is also indicated by Sasha. Her reflections on the psychological dimensions of returning to education as an adult alludes to the unique challenges posed by age-related factors, suggesting a heightened sensitivity to the nuances of learning and personal growth.

Lastly, a recurring challenge is a lack of confidence in their ability to succeed the second time round. This dispositional challenge and psychological barrier can impede their educational pursuits, as it requires participants to overcome self-doubt and develop a sense of self-assurance in their academic endeavours.

Collectively, the participants' narratives converge on themes of multiple responsibilities, time management, financial limitations, transportation constraints, unforeseen factors, and the psychological dynamics of returning to education. Their accounts illuminate the interplay of challenges they face as they strive to advance their education while navigating the many other demanding aspects of their personal and professional lives.

4.4.3.4 Support structures

One of the themes was the participants' perceived support structures, which are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Perceived support while navigating AET as returning adult students

Participant	Perceived support	Codes
Jolene	*My 14-year-old daughter supports me always. Wow, they are so supportive [referring to her husband and mother].*	Family: children Family: spouse/partner

	They just motivate me when I don't think I can do it. My mom would sometimes look after the kids when I need to do things. My husband helps also. My kids tell me "Mommy, you can do it".	Family: parent(s)
	… my prayer warriors at church are my anchors.	Community: church
Gabby	*My husband was very supportive … he said I could quit my job to focus on my studies.*	Family: spouse/partner
	My mom is very supportive of my kids; she takes good care of my kids. She takes the stress away when I need to focus.	Family: parent(s)
	The night schoolteachers are very supportive and push us.	AET: teachers
Laticia	*He [partner] encourages me and helps me out with printing for school.*	Family: spouse/partner
	They [referring to her children] support me, there's no crying about me having to study or attend school. They understand because I explained it to them, that mommy is going to school like them.	Family: children
Cindy	*… my child's father. He's very supportive.*	Family: parent(s)
	My sister helps my mom around the house so I can study.	Family: sibling(s)
	I have my sister, mother, and aunt that look after my son when I need to work.	Family: extended
Sasha	*... the company [referring to her employer] said they'd support me to complete school.*	Community: employer
	I have several colleagues who turned into 'family' over 20 years who support me.	Community: colleagues
	My brother and daughter are very supportive and always say they believe in me.	Family: children
		Family: sibling(s)
	I have my partner that I've been with for almost a year …	Family: spouse/partner

In the context of navigating their return to formal schooling as adult students, the participants in this study highlighted various forms of support in their immediate environments.

Various forms of support nestled in the participants' family, community, and school structures emerge as critical pillars. Familial support plays a pivotal role in their educational journeys. Laticia and Cindy emphasised the encouragement and practical assistance they received from their partners, reinforcing the importance of shared aspirations within relationships. Children, highlighted by Jolene, Gabby, Laticia, and Sasha, become sources of motivation and understanding, fostering an environment in which educational pursuits are valued and respected. Family members, including parents and siblings, extend their support by alleviating childcare burdens and domestic responsibilities, which enables the students to dedicate themselves to their studies.

The collective support of religious or community groups, as indicated by Jolene's church community, offers a sense of belonging and strength in times of self-doubt.

Professional environments prove instrumental, as exemplified by Sasha's employer, who not only accommodates her studies, but also provides financial aid. Colleagues-turned-family, such as those in Sasha's case, embody the significance of supportive relationships in fostering resilience and determination. Educational institutions also emerge as important support structures. Night schoolteachers, as seen with Gabby, contribute to a supportive learning environment that encourages progress.

These diverse forms of support collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of encouragement on which these returning adult students rely, highlighting the interplay between personal, familial, community, and institutional networks in their pursuit of education.

4.4.4   The envisioned future

In this section I present the data that reflect the participants' future hopes and aspirations, which are nestled in their career, personal, and family related goals. Their responses are summarised in Table 9.

Table 9: Future aspirations

Participant	Future aspirations	Codes
Jolene	*I want to teach grade 3 learners by 2027, meaning I must see this through. I must register for matric in August.*	Career goals
Gabby	*I want to be able to say that I managed to achieve something. I'm trying to be an example to my kids.*	Sense of achievement Setting an example
Cindy	*I'm hoping to get a good job with a good salary to buy a house for my son and [me]. I'd also like to improve my parent's current circumstances.*	Career goals Financial gain Familial support
Laticia	*I want to prove that I can do this. I need to make myself proud knowing that I did this despite the obstacles. I'd like to enrol for some courses … maybe in nursing.*	Sense of achievement Career goals
Sasha	*My reason for doing it is self-development. Who knows what the future will bring.*	Self-improvement

The participants expressed diverse and determined future aspirations as returning adult students. Jolene envisioned herself as a future educator, aspiring to teach grade 3 learners by 2027. Recognising the importance of her own academic journey, she acknowledged the necessity of registering for matric to fulfil her teaching goals. Gabby's aspirations are strongly linked to setting an example for her children. Her desire to achieve something significant serves as motivation to persevere in her educational pursuits. Laticia is resolute in her quest

to prove her capabilities and overcome obstacles. Her aspiration to make herself proud, despite the challenges she faces, fuels her determination. Laticia also contemplates enrolling in courses, potentially in the field of nursing, to further broaden her horizons. Cindy's future ambitions centre around securing a better life for herself and her son. She envisions securing well-paying employment that would allow her to purchase a house and elevate her family's circumstances. Sasha's drive for self-development reflects her commitment to continuous growth. Embracing education as a means of personal enrichment, she remains open to the possibilities that may unfold in the future.

The participants shared diverse and determined future aspirations, ranging from education-focused careers to setting positive examples for their children. Overcoming challenges, they were aiming to prove their capabilities, improve their lives, and embrace personal growth through their educational journey. Each participant's aspirations reflected a deep sense of purpose and resilience, depicting the transformative power of education in shaping their individual trajectories.

4.5   Summary

In this chapter I presented the study's data. The rigorous analytical procedures required that the data be coded and categorised, resulting in the emergence of themes that contextualised education, teenage pregnancy, continued educational pursuits, and prospective aspirations. In Chapter 5 I interpret the findings and discuss what they mean within the context of the research phenomenon. Based on the findings, I make suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Introduction

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to share the key findings of the study, reflect on their significance, and situate the research within the broader literature pertaining to the research phenomenon. This chapter encapsulates the main themes and insights that emerged from the qualitative research process. It includes a discussion of the limitations of the research, and concludes with recommendations based on the findings, and recommendations for future research.

The purpose of this study was to advance knowledge and understanding of the lived experiences of teenage mothers whose basic education was interrupted by pregnancy, and who had returned to continue their education as adult students. This study sought to capture the participants' unique narratives of their motivations for returning to and continuing with their education, as well as their strategies for navigating AET as adult students. In addition, the study aimed to understand the challenges encountered by these women as they pursued education as second-chance students. As an adult student myself, I found that, by coordinating the data collection process, I gained insights into the logistical challenges and the profound adversities that women face in managing seemingly routine tasks and responsibilities.

The nature of this study necessitated a qualitative research design grounded in a social constructivist approach (Daniels, 2020; Kim, 2014). Narrative inquiry was selected as the methodological framework, given that it is rooted in the epistemological belief that individuals make sense of their lived experiences through story structures (Bell, 2002). Delving beyond the surface-level details of individual stories, this inquiry aimed to explore the underlying assumptions that shape the construction of participants' stories. Narrative interviews were combined with semi-structured interview techniques and an autobiographical mapping tool

that allowed participants to express themselves beyond the linguistic confines of a narrative interview.

Several themes emerged from the qualitative analysis and interpretation of the study's findings that included disorder in the participants' early education, the challenges and consequences of teenage pregnancy, their reasons for continuing their basic education as adult students, and their hopes and aspirations for the future. Participants' narratives were explored through the lenses of transformative learning theory, intersectionality, and community cultural wealth theory. The disruption and subsequent interruption of the participants' schooling was positioned as a disorienting dilemma, while motherhood was proposed to have been catalytic in participants' re-entry into formal schooling. The strength and resources that participants brought to their educational experiences were indicated by their resilience, aspirations, and support structures.

5.2   Discussion of the research findings

5.2.1   Teenage pregnancy and education

The five cis female participants involved in this study represent a subset of a broader population of thousands of South African adolescent girls, aged 10 to 19 years, who experience pregnancies annual that lead to them dropping out of school (O'Regan, 2021). Educational research has concentrated predominantly on the phenomenon of school dropout, often neglecting the pivotal influence exerted by societal and familial contexts in precipitating the discontinuation of their formal schooling. This study aimed, in part, to uncover the specific circumstances that contributed to their pregnancies. What the study found was that the participants' teenage pregnancy, and the subsequent choices they made to discontinue their education prior to completing their compulsory formal schooling, were influenced by systemic barriers and societal challenges that contributed to their disengagement from education prior to falling pregnant.

Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) was crucial to my understanding of how their race, socio-economic status, and gender intersected to exacerbate the challenges faced by these pregnant teenagers. The consequences for pregnant girls are very different than for the boys who impregnate them. Primarily, it is girls who experience disruptions to or interruptions in their lives, which consequently affect their education The first piece of legislation concerning teenage pregnancy in schools was the South African Schools Act (SASA), which was passed in 1996. Bhana and Clowes (2008) observed that SASA focused solely on mothers and not on fathers, thus reinforcing gendered norms that assign the primary responsibility of childcare to women. An examination of additional literature concerning teenage pregnancy in South Africa revealed significant evidence indicating the gendered nature of childcare responsibilities, with the predominant burden often placed on teenage mothers (Willan, 2013). Not one of the five participants reported receiving any form of support from the teenage boys who had impregnated them. Instead, Gabby and Laticia revealed feelings of shame and isolation, Laticia and Sasha emphasised a lack of support, and Jolene and Cindy described a mounting sense of responsibility pertaining to their impending roles as mothers. The reality was that, aside from Sasha, who ironically happened to be the only participant to have experienced pregnancy prior to the implementation of SASA, none of the other girls received any form of counselling from their schools about their options post-pregnancy, despite them being in their final year of schooling and despite existing policies. Their narratives imply that they had only one choice – to drop out of school.

Girls raised in families with limited investment in their education or facing socio-economic difficulties often have very different choices to children from middle-class families. The participants' notably limited access to social support is revealed in their narratives. Gabby and Laticia recalled a lack of maternal support, and Sasha her father's disappointment and subsequent embarrassment. Jolene recalled not seeing the point of continuing her schooling. The compounded vulnerabilities, as described by Crenshaw (1989), that existed before their

pregnancies magnified the existing disparities. The occurrence of teenage pregnancy served as a pivotal point, further exacerbating the prevailing inequality, and highlighting the challenges they encountered.

5.2.2   Education continued

5.2.2.1   Motivation to continue

The participants' motivation for continuing their formal schooling as adult students, as well as their strategies for navigating their roles and responsibilities, was very different from when they were teenagers. They had now reached adulthood, and assumed the roles of caregivers for their own families and shouldered the corresponding responsibilities.

Maternal responsibilities surfaced as a strong driving force, propelling Jolene, Gabby and Cindy towards education as a mechanism to ensure improved prospects for their children. Jolene and Cindy emphasised their desire to provide a better life for their children, while Gabby highlighted her desire to set a positive example for her children. Gabby, Laticia, and Sasha demonstrated their shared goal of achievement through their respective narratives, with Sasha emphasising the lack of external incentives. A strong desire to better the lives of their families through advanced job opportunities and subsequent financial gain was also engrained in Jolene, Gabby, Cindy, and Laticia's stories. Shared among the participants was the acknowledgment of education as a pathway to improved conditions and enhanced prospects, encompassing both their personal trajectories and the well-being of their families.

In their teenage years, Jolene, Gabby, Cindy, and Laticia exhibited a lack of responsibility by prioritising social activities and parties over their academic pursuits. The current data, however, depicts a noteworthy transformation, as these adult women displayed a strong dedication to their education. They demonstrated significant sacrifices, such as leaving full-time employment to concentrate fully on their studies or utilising their government grant money

to cover taxi expenses. Their commitment is evident through practices like engaging in homework and studying in their lunch breaks.

The aspirations imbedded in the participants' motivations and reasons for continuing their education and creating pathways for their own educational success as adult students, despite systemic barriers and societal challenges, demonstrate their aspirational and navigational capital. This becomes evident in the profound shifts in their cognition, beliefs, and viewpoints, arising through purposeful critical reflection and meaningful discourse (Mezirow, 2005; Yosso, 2005).

5.2.2.2 Navigating AET as second-chance students: challenges and support

The participants' diverse strategies for navigating their educational pursuits as second-chance students reveal distinct forms of capital being employed, amid wide-ranging challenges. Jolene's disciplined routine and structured schedule reflect both aspirational and navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) embedded in her personal agency, as she invests in her education while juggling her familial and work responsibilities. Laticia's multitasking and efficient use of her lunch breaks at work illustrates her navigational capital through her ability to navigate her complex schedule and multiple responsibilities. Gabby's decision to prioritise education over full-time work represents a form of social capital, as she leverages her social networks and familial support to make this choice. Similarly, Sasha recalls the support she received from her coworkers, thereby also demonstrating how she makes use of social networks to advance her goal of completing her formal schooling. Sasha's commitment to education for self-development also resonates with Mezirow's focus on the emotional dimensions of learning. Her pursuit of education without the constraints of childcare responsibilities allows her to fully engage in transformative reflection and exploration of her personal and professional aspirations. Cindy and Laticia's integration of coursework into their daily routines highlights

the utilisation of familial capital, as they collaborate with their families to balance household tasks and educational commitments.

Balancing multiple responsibilities, such as parenting, household tasks, and employment, posed challenges that necessitated effective time management, the implementation of set plans, and the utilisation of the available support networks. The financial and logistical challenges that the women experienced, which were tied to transportation costs to and from classes, highlight the complexity of adult education. Whereas children only need to focus on their schooling, adults have to manage their schooling together with their multitude of roles and responsibilities. Although access to AET might in many cases be free, there are the hidden costs that could still make it difficult for cash-strapped adults to continue their education. The participants' familial and social networks provided a foundation of stability and established a sense of belonging, which in turn facilitated their continued education amid multiple other responsibilities. The participants demonstrated aspirational and navigational capital in their determination to pursue formal schooling as adult students.

5.2.3   The envisioned future

Jolene, Gabby, Laticia, Cindy, and Sasha all demonstrated resistant capital through the continuation of their formal education, despite systemic barriers and societal challenges (Yosso, 2005). The five women's narratives spoke of diverse and varied future aspirations, encompassing career paths related to education and a commitment to serving as positive role models for their children. In their pursuit of overcoming multiple challenges, they strived to validate their abilities, enhance their life circumstances, and engage in self-enrichment through their educational pursuits. The individual aspirations of each participant showcase profound purpose and resilience, depicting the profound impact of education on shaping their distinct life trajectories and demonstrating the breadth of their aspirational, navigational, social, familial, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005).

5.3   Limitations

This study was limited by the need to fulfil 50% of the requirements of an MEd degree. As such, it was a study of limited scope. The study was delimited to members of one racial group who shared a socio-economic context. This research was qualitative in nature. Consequently, the objective of this study was not to quantify the frequencies of the identified features and phenomena, and nor did it seek to generalise the findings to broader populations.

5.4   Recommendations for further research

Based on the findings, as well as the identified limitations, the following recommendations are made for further research:

- Longitudinal studies that follow teenage mothers who return to education as adult students over an extended period can provide insights into the long-term effects of their educational pursuits on their lives, careers, and well-being.
- This study focused on the unique stories of five women. The research did not explore the effect of available support programmes and interventions in facilitating the educational journeys of them as returning adult students. Further research could serve to expand knowledge and further develop such resources.
- An investigation into the effect of a mother's educational re-entry on her children's academic achievements, aspirations, and well-being could shed light on the intergenerational effects of education.

5.5   Conclusion

This study sought to explore the lived experiences of teenage mothers whose educational journeys were disrupted and interrupted by pregnancy, leading them to re-engage with formal schooling as second-chance adult learners. The women's stories revealed the undermining of teenage girls' right to education, even when they fall pregnant. It showed how systemic

variables such as socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, and gender intersect to further marginalise pregnant teenagers and their right to education. The inadequacy of social support infrastructure in poor communities contributes to the high incomplete education statistics for teenage mothers.

Protecting the rights of teenagers necessitates the safeguarding of their access to, and inclusion in, education. Teenagers who fall pregnant should be conscientized about their rights, post-pregnancy, to safeguard against their exclusion from and difficulties in pursuing their education after the birth of their babies. The education department should engage in critical reflection about the support measure in schools, and the ways in which the educational throughput of teenage mothers as high school students can be facilitated. A review of existing education policies is needed to identify shortcomings in it. It is imperative to go beyond policy adjustments and to implement initiatives that can help teenage mothers to complete their education.

The same arguments apply to women who re-enter the education system as second-chance adult students. These women continue to face numerous systemic and societal barriers as they navigate their return to education while balancing multiple roles and responsibilities. Where teenage pregnancy appears to have acted as a catalyst for dropping out of school, motherhood proved to be a significant motivating factor for their decision to re-engage in education. It is imperative to recognise that systemic and social barriers, however different in nature, continue to infiltrate these women's lives, posing the risk of again jeopardising their education.

It is crucial to move beyond facilitating the re-entry process and to prioritise the provision of unimpeded educational opportunities for women as second-chance adult students. This requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the systemic and societal barriers they face, ensuring that they not only re-enter education, but also are able to continue and complete

their studies successfully. The complex and interconnected circumstances and responsibilities faced by women who are re-entering education should guide policies that seek to include them. Only then can support measures be developed to create an inclusive and supportive environment that empowers these women to reach their educational goals.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM (ENGLISH)

Stellenbosch
UNIVERSITY
IYUNIVESITHI
UNIVERSITEIT

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are invited to take part in a study conducted by Cathryne Baird, an MEd student from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University. You were approached as a possible participant for the following reasons:

- You are a cis female South African adult student who, has had her formal primary or high school education interrupted by teenage pregnancy and motherhood

  AND

- You are enrolled in the Adult Education and Training (AET) programme at a Community Learning Centre (CLC) as a returning student

1. **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to promote in-depth understanding of the experiences of teenage mothers returning as adult students. This study seeks to explore your motivation for continuing your education, the ways in which you are navigating AET as a second chance learner, and the challenges you experience as a returning adult student with responsibilities. Your respective and collective experiences as second chance adult students could give visibility to the teenage mothers' complex and dynamic realities as they navigate their studies.

2. **WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?**

If you agree to take part in this study, you need to be available for a semi-structured interview in which we will explore your experiences as a returning adult student. The interview should take no more than an hour (60 minutes) and will take place at a venue that is convenient for you. You are expected to also participate in a focus group session with four other participants. The focus group session will explore your possible shared experiences and challenges of being a second chance student. You will be expected to treat any information shared during the focus group session, including information that may identify the other participants, as strictly confidential.

3. POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The researcher acknowledges that discussing one's experiences and related challenges may result in unintended distress. The researcher will make every effort to minimise such possible discomforts. Should you decide to withdraw from the research study, you will be free to do so without any required explanation or consequences to you.

4. POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO THE SOCIETY

There will be no monetary benefits to the participants of this study. However, the insights that can be gained from your stories could contribute to knowledge thereby expanding our understanding of teenage mothers' experiences as returning adult students.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

No form of compensation, financial or otherwise, will be rendered for participating in this study.

6. PROTECTION OF YOUR INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY, AND IDENTITY

Your confidentiality and rights as a participant in this study will be protected in the following ways:

- Any information that is gained through your participation in this study that may identify you will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission or if required by law.

- Information shared during the focus group session will be treated as strictly confidential by all participants.

- All names, places, and identifying features will be anonymised though the assignment of pseudonyms, unless negotiated otherwise.

- With your permission, audio recordings will be made of all interviews. The transcriptions will, however, be made available to you, for verification. Recordings and transcriptions will be stored on a password-protected computer.

- All transcriptions of audio recordings will be done by the researcher and stored on the university's OneDrive platform for a minimum period of 10 years, after which they will be permanently destroyed.

- Access to audio recordings, transcriptions and other relevant data will only be by the researcher, and with permission, to the supervisor.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any explanation or consequence. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering and remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this study if any circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

8. RESEARCHERS' CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Cathryne Baird [076 193 8501 or cathryneb@gmail.com] and/or the supervisor Professor Doria Daniels [doria@sun.ac.za].

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

10. COUNSELLING SERVICES

Hope House Counselling Centre is a non-profit organisation and will be available for participants who require counselling services. Their contact information is listed below.

Tel: 021 903 0521

         071 410 1091

Email: kuilsriver@hopehouse.org.za

         tokai@hopehouse.org.za

DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANT

As the participant I confirm that:

- I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.

- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.

- All issues related to privacy, and the confidentiality and use of the information I provide, have been explained.

By signing below, I _____ agree to take part in this research study, as conducted by Cathryne Baird. I further agree to treat all information gained from other participants during the focus group session as strictly confidential.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   **Date**

DECLARATION BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

As the **principal investigator,** I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the participant. I also declare that the participant has been encouraged (and has been given ample time) to ask any questions. In addition, I would like to select the following option:

	The conversation with the participant was conducted in a language in which the participant is fluent.
	The conversation with the participant was conducted with the assistance of a translator (who has signed a non-disclosure agreement), and this "Consent Form" is available to the participant in a language in which the participant is fluent.

_____

Signature of Principal Investigator   **Date**

_____

Signature of Principal Investigator   **Date**

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM (AFRIKAANS)

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITEIT

TOETSEMMING OM DEEL TE NEEM AAN NAVORSING

U word uitgenooi om deel te neem aan 'n studie wat gelei word deur Cathryne Baird, 'n MEd-student van die Departement Opvoedkundige Sielkunde aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch. U word om die volgende redes as 'n moontlike deelnemer genader:

- U is 'n volwasse Suid-Afrikaanse vroulike student wie se formele laer- of hoërskoolloopbaan deur tienerswangerskap en moederskap onderbreek is.

  _EN_

- U is ingeskryf vir die Volwasse Onderwys en Opleiding (AET)-program by 'n Gemeenskapsleersentrum (GLS) as 'n terugkerende student.

1. **DOEL VAN DIE STUDIE**

Die doel van hierdie studie is om in-diepte begrip van die ervarings van tienermoeders wat as volwasse studente terugkeer, te bevorder. Hierdie studie poog om u motivering vir die voortsetting van u onderrig te ondersoek, die maniere waarop u AET as 'n tweedekansleerder navigeer, en die uitdagings wat u ervaar as 'n terugkerende volwasse student met verantwoordelikhede. U onderskeie en kollektiewe ervarings as tweedekans volwasse studente kan sigbaarheid gee aan tienermoeders se komplekse en dinamiese realiteite terwyl hulle hul studies navigeer.

2. **WAT SAL VAN MY GEVRA WORD?**

Indien u instem om aan hierdie studie deel te neem moet u beskikbaar wees vir 'n semi-gestruktureerde onderhoud waarin ons u ervarings as 'n terugkerende volwasse student sal ondersoek. Die onderhoud

behoort nie meer as 'n uur (60 minute) te duur nie en sal plaasvind by 'n plek wat vir u gerieflik is. Daar word ook van u verwag om saam met vier ander deelnemers aan 'n fokusgroepsessie deel te neem. Die fokusgroepsessie sal fokus op die gedeelde ervarings en uitdagings van 'n tweedekans-student. *Daar sal van u verwag word om enige en alle inligting wat tydens die fokusgroepsessie gedeel word, insluitend inligting wat die ander deelnemers kan identifiseer, as streng vertroulik te hanteer.*

3. MOONTLIKE RISIKO'S EN ONGEMAK

Die navorser erken dat die bespreking van 'n mens se ervarings en verwante uitdagings kan lei tot onbedoelde nood. Die navorser sal elke poging aanwend om sulke moontlike ongemak tot die minimum te beperk. Sou u besluit om van die navorsingstudie te onttrek, sal u vry wees om dit te doen sonder enige verduideliking of gevolge.

4. MOONTLIKE VOORDELE VIR DEELNEMERS EN/OF VIR DIE GEMEENSKAP

Deelnemers sal nie vir hul deelname finansieël vergoed word nie. Die insigte wat uit u stories verkry kan word kan egter tot kennis bydra en sodoende ons begrip van tienermoeders se ervarings as terugkerende volwasse studente uitbrei.

5. BETALING VIR DEELNAME

Geen vorm van vergoeding, finansieel of andersins, sal toegedien word vir deelname aan hierdie studie nie.

6. BESKERMING VAN JOU INLIGTING, PRIVAATHEID EN IDENTITEIT

U privaatheid en regte as 'n deelnemer aan hierdie studie sal op die volgende maniere beskerm word:

- Enige inligting wat verkry word deur u deelname aan hierdie studie wat u kan identifiseer, sal vertroulik bly en sal slegs bekend gemaak word met u toestemming of indien dit deur wetgewing vereis word.
- Inligting wat tydens die fokusgroepsessie gedeel word, sal deur alle deelnemers as streng vertroulik hanteer word.
- Alle name, plekke en identifiserende kenmerke sal geanonimiseer word deur die toewysing van skuilname, tensy anders onderhandel.

- Oudio-opnames sal, met u toestemming, van alle onderhoude gemaak word. Die transkripsies sal egter aan u beskikbaar gestel word vir verifikasie. Opnames en transkripsies sal op 'n wagwoordbeskermde rekenaar gestoor word.

- Alle transkripsies van oudio-opnames sal deur die navorser gedoen word en vir 'n minimum tydperk van 10 jaar op die universiteit se OneDrive gestoor word, waarna dit permanent vernietig sal word.

- Toegang tot oudio-opnames, transkripsies en ander relevante data sal slegs vir die navorser en, met toestemming, aan die studieleier gegee word.

7. DEELNAME EN ONTTREKKING

U deelname aan hierdie studie is heeltemal vrywillig. As u instem om deel te neem, kan u enige tyd onttrek sonder enige verduideliking of gevolg. U kan ook weier om enige vrae te beantwoord wat u nie gemaklik voel om te beantwoord nie en steeds in die studie bly. Die navorser kan u aan hierdie studie onttrek indien enige omstandighede ontstaan wat dit regverdig.

8. NAVORSER SE KONTAKBESONDERHEDE

Indien u enige vrae of bekommernisse oor hierdie studie het, kontak asseblief die navorser, Cathryne Baird [076 193 8501 of cathryneb@gmail.com] en/of die studieleier Professor Doria Daniels [doria@sun.ac.za].

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

U kan u toestemming enige tyd terugtrek en u deelname sonder enige gevolge staak. U doen nie afstand van enige regseise of regte as gevolg van u deelname aan hierdie navorsingstudie nie. Indien u vrae het oor u regte as navorsingsdeelnemer, kontak me Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] by die Afdeling Navorsingsontwikkeling.

10. BERADINGSDIENSTE

Hope House Counseling Centre is 'n nie-winsgewende organisasie wat beskikbaar sal wees vir deelnemers aan hierdie studie. Die organisasie se kontakbesonderhede word gelys:

Tel: 021 903 0521

         071 410 1091

Email: kuilsriver@hopehouse.org.za

         tokai@hopehouse.org.za

``````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````

| **VERKLARING VAN TOESTEMMING DEUR DIE DEELNEMER** |
|---|

As deelnemer bevestig ek die volgende:

- Ek het bogenoemde inligting gelees en dit is geskryf in 'n taal waarmee ek gemaklik is.

- Ek is 'n kans gegee om vrae te vra en al my vrae is beantwoord.

- Alle kwessies wat verband hou met privaatheid en die vertroulikheid en gebruik van die inligting wat ek verskaf, is verduidelik.

Hiermee stem ek, _____, in om deel te neem aan hierdie navorsingstudie, soos uitgevoer deur Cathryne Baird. Ek stem verder in om alle inligting wat tydens die fokusgroepsessie van ander deelnemers verkry is, as streng vertroulik te hanteer.

_____          _____

**Handtekening van Deelnemer**                 **Datum**

| **VERKLARING VAN DIE HOOFNAVORSER** |
|---|

As die hoofondersoeker verklaar ek hiermee dat die inligting wat in hierdie dokument vervat is, deeglik aan die deelnemer verduidelik is. Ek verklaar ook dat die deelnemer aangemoedig is (en genoeg tyd gegun is) om enige vrae te vra. Daarbenewens wil ek graag die volgende opsie kies:

|   | Die gesprek met die deelnemer is gevoer in 'n taal waarin die deelnemer vlot is. |
|---|---|
|   | Die gesprek met die deelnemer is gevoer met die hulp van 'n vertaler (wat 'n nie-openbaarmakingsooreenkoms onderteken het), en hierdie "Toestemmingsvorm" is vir die deelnemer beskikbaar in 'n taal waarin die deelnemer vlot is. |

_____          _____

**Handtekening van Hoofnavorser**              **Datum**

# APPENDIX C: INSTITUTIONAL APPROVAL



**RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS**
REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form

24 November 2022

Project number: EPSY-2022-25880

Project title: Education interrupted: experiences of teenage mothers returning as adult students

Dear Mx CJ Baird

Your REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form submitted on 07/10/2022 10:53 was reviewed by the Social, Behavioural and Education Research Ethics Committee (REC: SBE) on 17 November 2022 and has been approved with certain conditions.

**This conditional approval means that you may proceed with your planned research, provided that you adhere or respond to the stipulations/conditions provided below.**

Your research ethics approval is valid for the following period:

| Protocol approval date (Humanities) | Protocol expiration date (Humanities) |
|---|---|
| 17 November 2022 | 16 November 2023 |

## REC STIPULATIONS/CONDITIONS:

| Title | Comment |
|---|---|
| 5.16 Please upload the informed consent template that will be used to confirm consent from participants | 1) The informed consent form (ICF) must also be translated into Afrikaans. 2) The counsellor's name should also appear on the ICF form. |
| 5.16 Please upload the informed consent template that will be used to confirm consent from participants | The REC updated its informed consent form templates in December 2021 to ensure alignment with privacy legislation, notably the national Protection of Personal Information Act (2013) and recent responsibility changes where by Mrs Clarissa Robertson is now the contact person for participants who have questions about their rights as research participants. Please use the updated consent forms as available on the REC webpage: http://www.sun.ac.za/english/research-innovation/Research-Development/Pages/REC-Documents.aspx |
| 5.22.3 Has the person/organisation who will assist with counselling been identified at this stage? | The PI should still identify a counsellor for debriefing services. This should be done before data collection may commence. |
| 6.12 Future use of data | The principal investigator (PI) indicated that data will be stored for a period of five years, under section 6.12 the PI indicates that data will not be stored after completion of the study. This should be corrected. Data should be stored for at least 10 years. |
| 8.1.1 Gatekeeper | Permission should be obtained from the gatekeeper organisations. |
| 10.1 Please indicate the risk classification for this project | The PI indicated that this is a low-risk, study, but it is a medium risk study. |

### How to respond to the REC: SBE's comments/questions:

Click on the links provided below for steps on how to edit your online application to respond to this request for clarification/changes:

Instructional video (See: How to edit your online application)

FAQ guide (See: Form FAQs > How to revise/edit my online form)

Template for response letter (See Other templates > Response letter template)

**INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

2. Your approval is based on the information you provided in your online research ethics application form. If you are required to make amendments to or deviate from the proposal approved by the REC, please contact the REC: SBE office for advice: applyethics@sun.ac.za

3. Always use this project ID number (25880) in all communications with the REC: SBE concerning your project.

4. Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, and monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process, where required.

**RENEWAL OF RESEARCH BEYOND THE REC EXPIRATION DATE**

You are required to submit a progress report to the REC: SBE before the project approval period expires if renewal of ethics approval is required.

If you have completed your research, you are required to submit a final report to the REC: SBE to close the active REC record for this project.

**Project documents approved by the REC:**

| Document Type | File Name | Date | Version |
|---|---|---|---|
| Research Protocol/Proposal | Ch1final | 14/07/2022 | 1 |
| Budget | Anticipated expenses | 14/07/2022 | 1 |
| Request for permission | Permission letter | 16/08/2022 | 1 |
| Data collection tool | Interview guide | 30/08/2022 | 1 |
| Data collection tool | Focus group | 30/08/2022 | 1 |
| Informed Consent Form | Consent form | 04/10/2022 | 2 |
| Recruitment material | Invitation letter | 04/10/2022 | 2 |
| Default | RESPONSE LETTER | 04/10/2022 | 1 |

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at applyethics@sun.ac.za.

Sincerely,

Mrs Clarissa Robertson (cgraham@sun.ac.za)
Secretariat: Social, Behavioural and Education Research Ethics Committee (REC: SBE)

## Principal Investigator Responsibilities

### Protection of Human Research Participants

As soon as Research Ethics Committee approval is confirmed by the REC, the principal investigator (PI) is responsible for the following:

**Conducting the Research**: The PI is responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC-approved research plan. The PI is jointly responsible for the conduct of co-investigators and any research staff involved with this research. The PI must ensure that the research is conducted according to the recognised standards of their research field/discipline and according to the principles and standards of ethical research and responsible research conduct.

**Participant Enrolment:** The PI may not recruit or enrol participants unless the strategy for recruitment is approved by the REC. Recruitment and data collection activities must cease after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials must be approved by the REC prior to their use.

**Informed Consent:** The PI is responsible for obtaining and documenting affirmative informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents/process, and for ensuring that no participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their affirmative informed consent. The PI must give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents, where required. The PI must keep the originals in a secured, REC-approved location for at least five (5) years after the research is complete.

**Continuing Review:** The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period.** Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, **it is the PI's responsibility to submit the progress report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur.** Once REC approval of your research lapses, all research activities must cease, and contact must be made with the REC immediately.

**Amendments and Changes:** Any planned changes to any aspect of the research (such as research design, procedures, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material, etc.), must be submitted to the REC for review and approval before implementation. Amendments may not be initiated without first obtaining written REC approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

**Adverse or Unanticipated Events:** Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research-related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to the REC within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. The PI must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the RECs requirements for protecting human research participants.

**Research Record Keeping:** The PI must keep the following research-related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence and approvals from the REC.

**Provision of Counselling or emergency support:** When a dedicated counsellor or a psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

**Final reports:** When the research is completed (no further participant enrolment, interactions or interventions), the PI must submit a Final Report to the REC to close the study.

**On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits:** If the researcher is notified that the research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, the PI must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

**APPENDIX D: PERMISSION LETTER**

_____

**INSTITUTION NAME & ADDRESS:** ████████████████████████████████████████

████████████████████████

**INSTITUTION CONTACT PERSON:** █████████

**INSTITUTION CONTACT NUMBER:** █████████

**INSTITUTION EMAIL ADDRESS:** ██████████████

_____

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT:  Education interrupted: experiences of teenage mothers returning as adult students

**ETHICS APPLICATION REFERENCE NUMBER:**

**RESEARCHER:** Cathryne Baird

**DEPT NAME & ADDRESS:**  Department Educational Psychology, 2024 GG Cillie Building, Ryneveld Street,

7600

**CONTACT NUMBER:**

**EMAIL ADDRESS:**

_____

Dear Cathryne Baird

We have reviewed your request to conduct a research project which is a requirement for completing your M Ed

degree at Stellenbosch University. It will involve adult students enrolled at this CLC.  You have permission to

access this facility. Participant consent should be negotiated with the participants by the researcher herself.

Sincerely,

**Name:** _____ (name and surname of the contact person at the institution)

*Who warrants that he/she is duly authorised to sign on behalf of* _____ *(name of institution)*

**Position:** _____

**Date:** _____

**Signature:** _____

**APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER**

**INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY:**

Education interrupted: experiences of teenage mothers returning as adult students

Are you a South African adult student who had your primary or high school education interrupted by teenage pregnancy and motherhood? Are you now continuing your education through the Adult Education and Training (AET) programme at a Community Learning Centre (CLC)? If so, I am interested in your story as part of a research project on second chance learning.

Dear AET student

I am Cathryne Baird, a MEd student at the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University. A requirement of my programme is that I complete a research project. For my study I choose to do research on the experiences that teenage mothers, as students,

have in AET. I would appreciate your participation in my research project and the opportunity to learn from you about your experiences.

Women's education is extremely important, yet many girls never complete their education because they become pregnant. Research suggests teenage pregnancy to be a leading cause of school dropout among teenage girls, 66% of which do not return to school after the birth of their babies. The primary aim of this study is to explore the experiences of teenage mothers returning as adult students. This study seeks to investigate your motivation for continuing your education, the ways in which you are navigating Adult Education and Training (AET) as a second chance learner, and the challenges you experience as a returning adult student.

If you meet the above mentioned criteria and are interested in contributing to important research, I invite you to attend an information session during which I will explain the research study, your contribution as a research participant, matters of confidentiality and consent, and answer any questions you may have.

**Please note:**

The information session will be open to anyone from *(Community Learning Centre)* who is interested to know more about the study. This means that your identity will be revealed to all other attendees upon attendance. By attending the information session, you agree to treat any information that is gained through the attendance of others that may identify them, as strictly confidential. Your attendance does not mandate or guarantee your participation in the research study. If at the end of the information session you decide not to participate in the research study, I will respect your decision. If you do decide to participate, I will be in further contact with you about the arrangements for participation.

**INFORMATION SESSION DETAILS:**

**DATE:**        _____

**PLACE:**        _____

**TIME:**        _____

If you have any further questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me via email (_____) or telephonically (_____).


Thank you in advance for your assistance in this regard.


Kind regards,

Cathryne Baird

Principal Investigator

**APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW GUIDE (ENGLISH)**

Education interrupted: experiences of teenage mothers returning as adult students

**INTRODUCTION**

***Welcome and purpose of the study***

I would like to start by welcoming you and thanking you for making yourself available for an interview with me. As you know, this research is about you – about your lived experiences as a teenage mother who is now an adult student. This is about your story. I am eager to learn from you and I hope that by sharing your story, others might be able to learn about and better understand your motivation for continuing your education.

**PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS**

I thought we would start with me getting to know you a little better.

**Demographic information**

Tell me a bit about you:

- Name
- Age
- When and where you were born
- A bit about your upbringing
- Parents
- Siblings

I would like to move our conversation to your education. Tell me more about where you went to school.

| Theme / topic | Follow-up questions / prompts |
|---|---|
| 1. Your experiences and relationship with relationship with education | • Thoughts and feelings pertaining to your education<br>• How would you describe yourself as a teenage student? / What kind of student were you? [academically, socially, etc]<br>• Relationship with education?<br>• What were your aspirations What did you want to achieve in life? Tell be about it. |
| 2. Next, I want to ask you about the circumstances that led to you leaving school. Are you still comfortable talking about that? | • Tell me more about leaving school and what that experience included. [Determine what her options were - whose decision was it that she drop out of school?]<br>• Was there a shift in the way you thought about or felt about your education? Tell me about it.<br>• What were the plans concerning the future at that stage? |

We've been talking about your experiences as a teenage student falling pregnant and leaving school, and now I'd like to move on to how you've gotten where you are currently. So, tell me about *(insert name)* currently:

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

| Main question / topic | Follow-up questions / prompts |
|---|---|
| 3. I would like to know more about you and your family / household. | • Who do you live with?<br>• Are you working? Tell me a little bit about your work responsibilities. |

| | • What about household responsibilities? Are some of these responsibilities shared among the others in your household? |
|---|---|
| 4. Tell me about your decision to continue your studies through AET? [responses/constraints/challenges] | • What was your motivation behind this decision?<br>• What did you want to accomplish?<br>• What were some of the important considerations in making this decision?<br>• Were there conversations with other people during this time?<br>• Who did you approach/talk to about your plans to further your studies?<br>• How did your family/partner respond to your plans? [challenges/constraints?] |

I've gained a little more insight into some of your decisions in returning to education, and now I'd like to dive a little deeper into daily life if that's okay.

| | |
|---|---|
| 5. I'm curious about the ways in which you have been, and currently are, navigating your education as a second-chance learner. | • Tell me how you've managed to make your studies apart of your everyday life that includes being a *(include roles and responsibilities mentioned in question 4)*<br>• Take me through your daily routine |
| 6. What are some of the challenges you've experienced as an adult learner? | • Are there people who have been a source of support to you in facing these challenges? Tell me about that.<br>• What are some of the ways you've managed to navigate these challenges that allow you to still be continuing your education today? |
| 7. Tell me about your experiences as an adult student, as compared to your experiences at high school. Are there differences in, for example, how you | • Any expected and/or unexpected things that come to mind?<br>• Are there differences in how you relate to your educators? |

| feel about education, and its value? [Ask for examples] | • To what do you attribute these differences?<br>• Would you say that there's a difference in the way you think about the role of education the future now than when you were a teenager? Tell me about that. |
| --- | --- |

We've been talking about your education and the ways in which you've managed to navigate your education in light of other roles and responsibilities. I'd like to move on to the future and what it might hold.

| 8. Tell me about your hopes for your future and the part that AET has played in the shaping of these hopes. | |
| --- | --- |

**CONCLUSION**

This has been so informative, and I've learned so much from you.

| 9. Is there anything else about your unique story and lived experiences that you would want to share with me? | • Perhaps something I didn't ask but you feel is significant to my understanding of your experiences? |
| --- | --- |

Thank you so much for sitting down with me today. Your contribution has been invaluable, and I hope to be able to share your unique experiences in a way that will increase readers' understanding of adult education as a second-chance opportunity.

Do you have any last questions or remarks before we say goodbye?

## APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW GUIDE (AFRIKAANS)

"Education interrupted: experiences of teenage mothers returning as adult students"

## INLEIDING

### *Welkom en doel van die studie*

Ek wil graag begin deur jou te verwelkom en te bedank dat jy jouself beskikbaar gestel het vir hierdie onderhoud. Soos jy weet, gaan hierdie navorsing oor jou – oor jou geleefde ervarings as 'n volwasse student. Dit gaan oor jou storie. Ek is gretig om by jou te leer en ek hoop dat jou storie ander sal toelaat om jou motivering om voort te gaan met jou opleiding beter te verstaan.

## VOORLOPIGE VRAE

Ek wil graag begin deur jou 'n bietjie beter te leer ken.

## Demographic information

Vertel my:

- Naam
- Ouderdom
- Wanneer en waar jy gebore is
- 'n Bietjie oor jou opvoeding/grootword
- Ouers
- Sibbe

Ek wil graag beweeg na jou opvoeding. Vertel my meer oor waar jy skoolgegaan het.

| Tema/Onderwerp | Opvolg vrae |
|---|---|
| 10. Jou ervarings en verhouding met onderwys | • Gedagtes en gevoelens met betrekking tot jou opvoeding.<br>• Hoe sou jy jouself as 'n tienerstudent beskryf? / Watter soort student was jy? [akademies, sosiaal, ens.]<br>• Verhouding met onderwys?<br>• Wat was jou aspirasies? Wat wou jy in die lewe bereik? Vertel my daaroor. |
| 11. Vervolgens wil ek jou uitvra oor die omstandighede wat daartoe gelei het dat jy die skool verlaat het. Is jy nog gemaklik om daaroor te praat? | • Vertel my meer oor skool verlaat en wat daardie ervaring ingesluit het. [Bepaal wat haar opsies was - wie se besluit was dit dat sy skool verlaat?]<br>• Was daar 'n verskuiwing in die manier waarop jy oor jou opvoeding gedink of gevoel het? Vertel my daarvan.<br>• Was daar 'n plan vir die toekoms? Wat was die plan oor die toekoms op daardie stadium? |

Ons het nou gesels oor jou ervarings as 'n tienerstudent wat swanger geraak het en skool verlaat het. Nou wil ek aanbeweeg na hoe jy gekom het waar jy tans is. So, vertel my van *(voeg naam in)* vandag:

## NAVORSINGSVRAE

| Hoofvraag/onderwerp | Opvolgvrae |
|---|---|
| 12. Ek wil graag meer van jou en jou gesin/huishouding weet. | • Saam met wie woon jy?<br>• Werk jy? Vertel my 'n bietjie van jou werksverantwoordelikhede.<br>• Wat van huishoudelike verantwoordelikhede? Word sommige van hierdie verantwoordelikhede onder die ander mense in jou huishouding gedeel? |

| 13. Vertel my van jou besluit om jou studies deur AET voort te sit? | • Wat was jou motivering agter hierdie besluit? <br><br> • Wat wou jy bereik? <br><br> • Wat was van die belangrike oorwegings relatief tot hierdie besluit? <br><br> • Was daar gesprekke met ander mense gedurende hierdie tyd? <br><br> • Met wie het jy genader/gesels oor jou planne om verder te studeer? <br><br> • Hoe het jou gesin/vennoot op jou planne gereageer? [uitdagings/beperkings?] |
|---|---|

Ek verstaan 'n bietjie meer oor sommige van die besluite wat jy geneem het rakende jou terugkeer na onderrig en opleiding, en nou wil ek 'n bietjie dieper in die daaglikse lewe induik as dit reg is.

| 14. Ek is nuuskierig oor die maniere waarop jy jou opleiding as tweedekansleerder bestuur. | • Vertel my hoe jy dit reggekry het om jou studies los te maak van jou alledaagse lewe wat (sluit rolle en verantwoordelikhede genoem in vraag 4 in) insluit. <br><br> • Neem my deur jou daaglikse roetine |
|---|---|
| 15. Wat is van die uitdagings wat jy al as volwasse leerder ervaar het? | • Is daar mense wat vir jou 'n bron van ondersteuning was om hierdie uitdagings aan te pak? Vertel my daarvan. <br><br> • Ek wonder oor die maniere waarop jy dit reggekry het om hierdie uitdagings te bestuur sodat jy vandag steeds jou opleiding kan voortsit? |
| 16. Vertel my van jou ervarings as 'n volwasse student in vergelyking met jou ervarings op hoërskool. Is daar verskille in, byvoorbeeld, hoe jy oor onderwys | • Enige verwagte en/of onverwagte dinge wat by jou opkom? <br><br> • Is daar verskille in hoe jy met jou opvoeders verband hou? <br><br> • Waaraan skryf jy hierdie verskille toe? |

| voel, en die waarde daarvan? [Vra vir voorbeelde] | • Sou jy sê dat jy nou anders dink oor die rol van onderwys in die toekoms as toe jy 'n tiener was? Vertel my daarvan. |
|---|---|

Ons het nou gepraat oor jou opvoeding en die maniere waarop jy dit reggekry het om jou opleiding te bestuur te midde jou ander rolle en verantwoordelikhede. Ek wil graag aanbeweeg na die toekoms en wat dit kan inhou.

| 17. Vertel my van dit wat jy voor hoop vir jou toekoms en die rol wat AET gespeel het in die vorming van hierdie hoop. | |
|---|---|

## AFLSUITING

My gesprek met jou was so insiggewend, en ek het so baie by jou geleer.

| 18. Is daar enigiets anders oor jou unieke storie en geleefde ervarings wat jy met my sal wil deel? | • Dalk iets wat ek nie gevra het nie, maar wat jy voel is betekenisvol vir my om jou ervarings beter te verstaan? |
|---|---|

Baie dankie dat jy vandag met my gesels het. Jou bydrae was van onskatbare waarde, en ek hoop om jou unieke ervarings te kan deel op 'n manier wat lesers se begrip van volwasse onderwys as 'n tweede-kans geleentheid sal verhoog.

Het jy enige laaste vrae of opmerkings voor ons groet?

**APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE (ENGLISH)**

Education interrupted: experiences of teenage mothers returning as adult students

**INTRODUCTION**

*Welcome and purpose of the study*

I would like to start by welcoming you all and thanking you for making yourself available to be here for a second time. I have had the privilege of sitting down with each of you and learning about your lived experiences, and each story has contributed to the research and my own understanding in such a unique way. I'm hoping that this focus group session will shed light on the experiences that are shared by the group, and that we can discuss some of the common themes, if any, identified within each of your stories.

*Explaining the format of the interview*

Our focus group today will start with an activity followed by a discussion. We will have about 90 minutes together with a little break halfway through.

*Opportunity for questions*

Do you have any questions or concerns before we get started?

**RIVER OF LIFE**

**The river**

I want you to think about your education – from as early as you can remember to where you are now. I want you to think about the turning points, the challenges, the support, or lack thereof, and the changes. We've explored some of these in your individual interviews, so perhaps that will help you to think about your educational journey as a whole.

So, if your education was a river, what would it look like? Where would it bend and turn? Perhaps in times of change? A sudden change might be a sharp turn that changes your river's course, a small change might be a more subtle bend. There may be boulders or rocks that create certain barriers in the flow of the water. These might represent obstacles you've faced along the way. The water might be tranquil and steady in some places, and rough and irregular in other spots. There may be certain elements that fit your river that I have not mentioned that represent certain experiences.

I want you to draw your river with its bends and turns, steady and unsteady waters, obstacles, and anything else that fits *your* river – *your* educational experiences. The point of this activity is not to create a masterpiece. It's about reflecting on your experiences. You are welcome to use anything that's available to draw your river.

**The environment**

Now that you've drawn your river, I'd like you to focus a little more on the environment surrounding your river. I'd like you to draw, or indicate however you prefer, the people that were significant at any point in your river. The significance is completely from your point of view.

## DISCUSSION

Participants are invited to share their drawings and speak to the different elements they've included in their drawings. After each participant has presented their drawing, the discussion is opened to the whole group to discuss some of their reflections on each other's rivers. Mutual themes, if any, are identified and discussed.

**CONCLUSION**

I'd like to thank each and every one of you for your time, your commitment, and, most importantly, your stories. I promise to treat them with the care they deserve, and to use them to contribute to an even bigger story about women's education. Once the research project is completed, you will each receive a copy.

Are there any questions or concerns before we say goodbye?

## APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE (AFRIKAANS)

## INLEIDING

### *Welkom en doel van die studie*

Ek wil graag begin deur julle almal welkom te heet en julle te bedank vir jule tyd en bereidwilligheid om weer met my te gesels. Ek het die voorreg gehad om met elkeen van julle te gesels oor julle ervarings, en elke verhaal het op 'n unieke manier bygedra tot hierdie navorsing en my eie begrip. Ek hoop dat hierdie fokusgroepsessie lig sal werp op julle gedeelde ervarings.

### *Verduideliking van die onderhoudsformaat*

Ons fokusgroep begin met 'n aktiwiteit gevolg deur 'n bespreking. Ons sal ongeveer 90 minute besig wees met 'n kort breuk tussenin.

### *Geleentheid vir vrae*

Het julle enige vrae voordat ons begin?

## RIVER OF LIFE

### Die rivier

Ek wil hê julle moet dink aan julle opvoeding - van so vroeg as wat julle kan onthou tot waar julle nou is. Ek wil hê julle moet dink aan die keerpunte, die uitdagings, die ondersteuning, of die gebrek daaraan, en die veranderinge. Ons het sommige van hierdie aspekte in julle individuele onderhoude ondersoek, dus mag dit dalk help om na julle opvoedkundige reis as 'n geheel te kyk.

As julle opvoeding 'n rivier was, hoe sou dit lyk? Waar sou dit buig en draai? Dalk in tye van verandering? 'n Skielike verandering mag dalk 'n skerp draai wees wat die koers van julle rivier verander, 'n meer subtiele verandering mag dalk 'n sagter buig wees. Daar mag dalk klippe of rotse wees wat sekere versperrings in die vloei van die water skep. Dit mag dalk moeilikhede verteenwoordig wat julle onderweg teëgekom het. Die water mag dalk kalm en stabiel wees op sommige plekke, en rof en ongereeld op ander plekke. Daar mag sekere elemente wees wat by julle rivier pas en wat ek nie nou genoem het nie wat jou unieke ervarings verteenwoordig.

Ek wil hê julle moet julle rivier teken met sy buie en draaie, stabiele en onstabiele water, hindernisse, en enigiets anders wat by julle rivier - julle opvoedkundige ervarings - pas. Die doel van hierdie aktiwiteit is nie om 'n meesterstuk te skep nie. Dit is bloot 'n middel vir refleksie. Julle is welkom om enige iets wat beskikbaar is te gebruik om julle rivier te teken.

**Die omgewing**

Noudat julle julle rivier geteken het, wil ek hê julle moet fokus op die omgewing van julle rivier. Ek wil hê julle moet die mense wat op enige punt in julle rivier betekenisvol was, teken of aandui op die manier wat julle verkies. Jy belsuit oor die betekenisvolheid.

<div align="center">

**BESPREKING**

</div>

Deelnemers word uitgenooi om hulle tekeninge te deel en te praat oor die verskillende elemente wat hulle in hulle tekeninge ingesluit het. Na elke deelnemer hul tekening voorgelê het, word die bespreking vir die hele groep oopgemaak om sommige van hul refleksies oor mekaar se riviere te bespreek. Gemeenskaplike temas, indien enige, word geïdentifiseer en bespreek

**APPENDIX J: PORTION OF TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW**

Researcher:    Tell me about the circumstances that lead to you leaving school.

Respondent:  I fell pregnant when I was 16 and a half. My parents found out and my dad was very distraught to the extent that he didn't want me to leave the house because my pregnancy was shameful. She was born prematurely at 7 months. The teachers came to our house saying that I could finish school and that they'd support me, but I decided against it as I didn't want to disappoint my dad any further. I decided that I needed to break free and got married.

Researcher:  Mmmm. So, you got married?

Respondent:  Yes, I did. I was married for 7 years until things changed. I have been a single parent, but I don't know whether I still qualify to be called 'a single parent' as my daughter is 28 (giggles).

Researcher:    You are if she still lives with you (laughs).

Respondent:  (laughs) True. The only solace is that she obtained her BTech degree, she's working in Public Relations so she's doing well for herself.

Researcher:    Amazing. So, you were focused on getting married at the time?

Respondent:  It was a means of surviving as I had to be a wife and a mother. It was a major change. I've always put others first. About 6 years ago I volunteered to be retrenched as I knew that the universe would connect the dots eventually and the company supported me to complete school.