Reviewer’s report

Title: Predictors of birth outcomes through changing times: a 32-year historical cohort study in an industrial city

Version: 1 Date: 20 June 2008

Reviewer: Amy Branum

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In general, this is an interesting descriptive paper of trends of pregnancy and birth outcomes in an English city. The results will be useful to others conducting trend analysis on a regional or national level. A few discretionary revisions follow.

1. This may be nit-picking, but the title is a bit misleading. Based on the title I expected an analysis of which predictors most strongly indicated adverse birth outcomes, and if those associations had changed over time. For example, I was expecting to see results like whether maternal age a stronger predictor (in the regression analysis sense) of low birthweight in the 1960s compared to the 1990s, versus an analysis of trends in factors that are associated with adverse birth outcomes. In addition, stillbirth and infant mortality are not predictors of birth outcomes, per se.

2. It might be interesting if the Authors looked at a few birth outcomes according to the deprivation index. Although the Authors illustrate the important trend in the widening SES gap over time, it could be useful to the reader to see how that trend may have directly impacted low birthweight or preterm birth (e.g., do women in the highest quintile have more low birthweight now than they did in the 1960s?).

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests