Reviewer's report

Title: Why some women choose a childbirth setting against medical advice in the Netherlands: A qualitative analysis

Version: 0 Date: 01 Mar 2017

Reviewer: Rosalind Haddrill

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for asking me to review this interesting paper. I have suggested some amendments below:

General:

The work is generally well written, however there are some irregularities with referencing - e.g. some identified by name (line 43 - unpublished?, line 258 - Plested?), others numbered. Also quotations are not accurately cited, as there are no page numbers given, e.g. lines 57-60, 362-365, 380-381, 409-411, 413-414, 502-503, etc. There seem to be some unsubstantiated statements, and others with weak referencing; for example the statement on lines 40-43 underpins the whole paper but is only loosely referenced to (as yet) unpublished work, also lines 356-362 attributed to an American website.

I notice that in your text you generally talk about 'birth', but some of the quotations from the women use the word 'delivery' - is this a translation issue? This seems unusual, given that it is usually used the other way round. Perhaps you might consider using the term 'maternity care' rather than obstetric care (without fear - line 488), as this includes both midwifery and medical care? Also there are some other quirks in the quotations, for example use of the American slang 'top broad' (line 296, 'great woman' perhaps?) and some tense issues. Some of the quotes are quite bitty/broken up with parentheses, and hard to read.

Methods:

The method is well documented. It was good to see the discussion of the constant comparison method, though a little more information about how the interviews changed over the course of the study would have been good, for example which topics were added later.

I am not certain about the inclusion of both women experiencing unassisted childbirth/freebirth and those having births at home against medical advice but with trained support present. These
seem like two very different groups of women, one a subset of the other perhaps. This difference doesn't seem to be acknowledged anywhere, whether in methods or discussion, which is a weakness.

Also there's also no mention of reflexivity in your strengths and limitations. Do you think the fact that the interviews were undertaken by 'researchers with a professional interest in women's motivations to give birth outside the guidelines' was influential on the responses given by the women?

Themes:

I'm not sure about the title of the theme: 'Discrepancy in definition of authoritative knowledge'. If women are making their own definitions (as you describe the two 'schools of thought') surely this is highly personal rather than authoritative, though equally influential on their choices? Perhaps this is a translational issue, or a slightly different word is needed here?

In 'Conflict during negotiation of the birth plan' the discussion does not really seem to be around the birthplan as such, but rather broader negotiations around the birth itself and the woman's wishes? I'm not sure about the relevance of some of the discussion and evidence around use of documented birthplans, as this seems slightly abstract.

Discussion/conclusions:

Most significantly the Dutch context, with its low rates of intervention and high homebirth rates, doesn't seem part of the discussion and conclusions, which is a shame, given its mention at the outset. The huge difference between the medical and legal systems of the USA and the Netherlands in relation to childbirth surely requires some acknowledgement? This could have been much stronger.

The importance of continuity of carer also seems to be underplayed in your discussion, as it seems to have been a universal concern and pivotal in the majority of women's decision making, whether for UC or births 'outside of the system'. There is no mention of the vital importance of continuity, or maintaining channels of communication with women outside of mainstream maternity care, in your 'implications for practice' or final recommendations.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?  
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?  
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?  
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?  
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

Quality of written English  
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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