Author's response to reviews

Title: Early Motherhood: A Qualitative Study Exploring the Experiences of African Australian Teenage Mothers in Greater Melbourne, Australia *1 Mimmie Claudine Ngum Chi Watts, MPH, PhD Lecturer, College of Health and Biomedicine, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia P O Box 14428 Melbourne, Australia. Tel: +613 9919 2766. Mimmie.ngumchi@vu.edu.au 2 Pranee Liamputtong, PhD Professor, School of Public Health & Human Biosciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria, Australia 3086. Pranee@latrobe.edu.au 3 Celia McMichael, PhD Lecturer, School of Social Sciences and Communications, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria, Australia 3086 c.mcmichael@latrobe.edu.au *1 Corresponding Author

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor

BMC - Public Health,

I am writing on behalf of co-authors and myself in regards to manuscript number MS: 8305605721579000. Below is the list of changes made as specified in your email dated Saturday 21st of January 2015.

The changes made include:

a) **Title page and authors details:**

Title: *Early Motherhood: A Qualitative Study Exploring the Experiences of African Australian Teenage Mothers in Greater Melbourne, Australia*

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b) **Abstract** changed and formatted as advised:

**Background**

Motherhood is a significant and important aspect of life for many women around the globe. For women in communities where motherhood is highly desired, motherhood is considered crucial to the woman’s identity. Teenage motherhood, occurring at a critical developmental stage of teenagers’ lives, has been identified as having adverse social and health
consequences. This research aimed to solicit the lived experiences of African Australian young refugee women who have experienced early motherhood in Australia.

**Methods**

This qualitative research used in-depth interviews. The research methods and analysis were informed by intersectionality theory, phenomenology and a cultural competency framework. Sixteen African born refugee young women who had experienced teenage pregnancy and early motherhood in Greater Melbourne, Australia took part in this research. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and data analysed using thematic content analysis. Ethics for this research was approved by Victoria University Human Research Ethics committee.

**Results and Discussion**

Motherhood brings increased responsibilities, social recognition, and a sense of purpose for young mothers. Despite the positive aspects of motherhood, participants faced challenges that affected their lives. Most often, the challenges included coping with increased responsibilities following the birth of the baby, managing the competing demands of schooling, work and taking care of a baby in a site of settlement. The young mothers indicated they received good support from their mothers, siblings and close friends, but rarely from the father of their baby and the wider community. Participants felt that teenage mothers are frowned upon by their wider ethnic communities, which left them with feelings of shame and embarrassment, despite the personal perceived benefits of achieving motherhood.

**Conclusions**

We propose that service providers and policy makers support the role of the young mothers’ own mother, their grandmothers and aunts following early motherhood. Such support from significant females will help facilitate young mothers’ re-engagement with education, work and other aspects of life. For young migrant mothers, this is particularly important in order to facilitate settlement in a new country and reduce the risk of subsequent mistimed pregnancies.

**Keywords**

Teenage pregnancy; early motherhood; Africa; Australia; migrant; refugee

  c) **Line and page numbers** have been added throughout the manuscript
  d) **Competing interest** – the following statement has been added in relation to Competing Interests.

We the authors of this manuscript declare that we have no competing interests.

**Financial competing interests**

In the past five years have we have not received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future. We do not hold any stocks or shares in an
organization that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future. We do not hold and are not currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript. We have not received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds nor have applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript. We do not have any other financial competing interests.

Non-financial competing interests
There are no non-financial competing interests (political, personal, religious, ideological, academic, intellectual, commercial or any other) to declare in relation to this manuscript.

e) **Author’s Contribution** the following statement has been added in relation to authors’ contribution:

1) All authors listed on this manuscript have made substantial contributions to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data; 
2) All authors have been involved in drafting the manuscript or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and 3) have given final approval of the version to be published.

MCNCW carried out the research which was towards an academic qualification. PL and CM supported and guided her during the research process. MCNCW conceived the study; PL and CM participated in its design, coordination and helped to draft the manuscript and made contributions as the manuscript evolved. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

f) The **RATS guidelines** were used for this research and the manuscript; following suggestions from the editor we ensured our manuscript met those guidelines.

Sincerely,

Dr M. Ngum Chi Watts