Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 5
Date: 5 May 2015
Reviewer: Lesley Hoggart

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions.

1. This is an interesting and original paper on an important topic, that I would like to see published. However, I think it could be significantly improved by greater focus. Two major issues are presented: intersectionality that shapes and defines the young mothers' personal experiences; and young mother's experiences and accounts of social support networks. There is a somewhat of a mismatch between the data presented (mainly on the social support theme), and the claims in the discussion to have used intersectionality theory to provide ‘a framework whereby the complex and diverse lives of early motherhood could be understood’ (p14). The paper should be re-worked to focus on one of these major issues OR substantially developed to connect the two. The second option would require a significantly longer paper.

2. The authors need to consider their choice of quotations a little more carefully, and expand their analysis of each quotation. The quotations are being left to speak for themselves without enough explanation and analysis of the points being made. Additionally, I found it difficult to match some of the quotations to the point being made. Quotes: on page 7 (Alimatou’s quote would benefit from more context. I think it is being used to indicate mixed experiences, but the examples given seem to be positive); page 8 (Jessica starts by saying it was easy with just Rosy, but it doesn’t sound that easy. It is not clear when it was easy – with Rosy or before then?); page 11 (Stephanie’s quote does not seem to fit with the point being made at all. She seems to be talking about men in general when she is making the point about money and them knowing you have a child, rather than the father but this is a section about the baby’s father). These are the quotes which were the most difficult for me to connect to the narrative, but I think all the quotes could do with further analysis.

Minor Essential Revisions.

3. The abstract conclusions call on providers and policy makers to support the role of the young mothers’ female relatives, but does not include sisters who are discussed in the findings. Nor is the need for service development mentioned.

4. Introduction and literature review: the terms teenage, girls and adolescent are being used interchangeably. These are much debated concepts and definitions and discussions are needed.

5. Two contextual issues mentioned in other literature (certainly in the UK) that
are not discussed at all are: social and cultural meanings attached to marriage, and to abortion. Both these issues are surely relevant to the intersectionality discussion.

6. Data analysis section: more detail is needed on the methodology. Was the thematic analysis really reduced to searching (and counting?) key words?

7. Methods: a key informant is mentioned, rather out of the blue, on page 12. There is no indication in the methods section that key informants were interviewed. And this is a very specific key informant connected to the Church used to illustrate views of the wider African community. Something needs to be said about strength (or otherwise) of the church in the community.

8. Discussion: the claim that the young mothers were also confronting ongoing challenges of settlement in Australia is not well supported by the data presented in earlier sections. I think that more work needs to be done to establish what is specific about becoming a young mother in a new country. (This point is related to point 1 above).

9. Implications for service providers and policy makers (pp.16-17): An important point being made about biological parents being present has not really been demonstrated by the data presented, or by other literature.

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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