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**Women's experiences of Home Birth Care: Across Two Cultures, Ireland &
Washington State, USA**

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Abstract

The number of planned home births in Ireland and Washington State (WA), USA, is increasing. Recent statistics in Ireland has shown a 50% increase in the number of home births between 2009 (n = 217) and 2010 (n = 326) (CSO, July 2012). The provision of home birth services in Ireland is however extremely limited (O' Boyle, 2013) despite the demand from women. Whereas, in WA State there was a 28% increase in home births between 2009 (n = 1263) and 2010 (n = 1616). Ireland and WA State have also similar annual birth rates (2010: Ireland – 73,724 and WA State - 86, 510) (CSO, 2012; DOH, 2011). Research has also highlighted that by normalizing pregnancy and childbirth, unnecessary interventions during childbirth are reduced resulting in better outcomes (Birthplace in England Collaborative Group, 2011; Hodnett *et al.*, 2010). Women often experience less interventions during childbirth at home than in hospital, however it is fundamental that women receive competent, high-quality maternity care from the midwife in their home.

The purpose of this study is to illuminate common, yet often overlooked decisions of women to birth at home and to highlight home birth care experiences, which can generate meaning and understanding. A purposive sample of 7-9 women, each in Ireland and WA state, who are English speaking and had a planned home birth between 2010 and 2013. A Heideggerian

hermeneutic approach using in-depth individual interviews will be conducted in the participant's homes or self-selected location. Field notes will contribute to the meaning. The interviews will be transcribed verbatim and analyzed using hermeneutic data analysis. Heideggerian traditions provide an indispensable influence for the study of childbirth, particularly as the "experience" is significant for women and their families.