**Integrating primal wisdom with modern science and practice as a global strategy for mothers, infants, families and communities**

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**Aim & Background**: This presentation draws on my independent empirical study of the Himba, an indigenous culture of Northern Namibia. It suggests ways that we can learn from primal wisdom practices to develop attunement, empathy and compassion, fundamental for mothers and children to thrive, to integrate them with resonating scientific discoveries of epigenetics, interpersonal neuroscience, attachment and mindfulness theory. It challenges our understanding of pre and perinatal processes and the crucial impact of human virtues through cross-cultural comparisons. It takes a look at maternal and infant health in the context of our lives and society and explores primal wisdom as the best available window into the social lives of our ancestors, sustaining uncomplicated birth, motherhood and secure attachment, and uses them as a model of sustainability to integrate with modern sensibility.

**Methodology**: Journaling, observations and interviews, images and stories of integrated and shared motherhood and childcare offer us insights into the quest of how connected in our society we are to motherhood and how aware of the impact of pre and perinatal mental health on child development and society. Through connecting with and understanding indigenous mothers and children through the body language and implicit processes, I could have a palpable experience of primal wisdom and intersubjectivity at play. The Himba manifested an innate capacity for empathy, intuitive understanding, morality and cooperation, suggesting these develop in early life through intergenerational transmission of pre/perinatal practices and communal care, and are foundation of maternal and infant wellbeing, and a peaceful society.

**Results**: This empirical research introduces an expanded view of human development and mental health, which begins before conception and moves through early childhood in an unbroken continuum in care. I explain how pregnancy, birth and developmental trauma, a product of our society, can impact parents' wholeness and consequently the relationship with their baby and his development prior to birth, and suggest ways for prevention and healing.

**Conclusions**: Small-scale societies like the Himba teach us the vital importance of a compassionate community and shared care in supporting maternal and infant mental health. This presentation is an urgent call for pre/perinatal healthcare professionals to recreate the village and integrate primal wisdom and related interpersonal neuroscience, attachment theory and pre/perinatal psychology in their trainings for the wellbeing of mothers, infants, families and communities. It calls for a more humane approach to maternal care beginning from pregnancy to prevent maternal suffering and developmental trauma.

**Keywords**: Perinatal-infant mental health, primal wisdom, motherhood, social support, community, pre/perinatal healthcare professionals, pregnancy, shared childcare, developmental trauma.