

Sharing Space

Continuing a Global Perspective of PPN Activism

Sandra Bardsley

Abstract: This beautifully expressed brief personal reflection from APPPAH's president, Sandra Bardsley, builds on the previous article from Robbie Davis-Floyd. It highlights the contributions of APPPAH (previously PPPANA) to understanding the importance of prenatal life and birth to each individual and to our world.

Keywords: APPPAH, PPPANA, childbirth, maternal-child health

It was a beautiful, sunny day in southern California. Rays of sunlight streamed through the one window in the room, but we were paying no attention to the outdoors. I had come to attend one of the bi-annual conferences of the Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology Association of North America (PPPANA, now known as APPPAH). We were all glued to our chairs, intently listening to a very impassioned and stimulating talk being given by a young cultural anthropologist by the name of Robbie Davis-Floyd. The publication of her ground-breaking book *Birth, an American Right of Passage* (1992) was being presented and discussed. It was a very stimulating talk.

I remember that following the presentation she had us all gather in a circle and talk about what we each were going to commit to doing to further the work of educating the world about the work of PPPANA (APPPAH). We were to say something we each planned to do in our lifetime to improve pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and attachment parenting. I was working to reconstruct my life as a former midwife and now a childbirth educator, birth and parenting counselor, and doula

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instructor. I remember feeling a strong desire to take Robbie's words into my heart and life. I made a verbal commitment that day to find ways to serve this important work. I decided to continue my university studies concerning psychology and counseling and to continue the research and writing of my book, *Creating a Joyful Birth Experience: Developing a Partnership With Your Unborn Child for Healthy Pregnancy, Labor and Early Parenting* (1994).

I developed a close relationship with Robbie and several other activists in the field of maternal-child health. I continued gaining education as a childbirth educator and birth counselor. I became very involved with groups, such as Lamaze International, working to continue to improve options for babies, mothers, and fathers. I had the great opportunity of forming a close alliance with many great leaders of these movements, such as many of the founders of the Coalition for Improving Maternity Services (CIMS) and the formation of the 10 steps to the MotherBaby Friendly Childbirth Initiative and IMBCO. Among those wonderful young leaders were Robbie Davis-Floyd, Debra Pascali-Bonaro, Suzanne Arms, Judith Lothian, Barbara Harper, Barbara Hotelling, and so many more wonderful women. They have all influenced me greatly over the years, and are still doing so. I was amazed to see how Robbie, Debra, and others took the basic tenets of the CIMS's MotherBaby Friendly Childbirth's 10 steps and moved them out into the world, creating a global impact with the IMBCI. That inspired me further.

Years later, in 2009, at another APPPAH international congress, I heard and felt the impassioned speech of another great leader, Thomas VERNY MD (co-founder of APPPAH). Thomas stood before us holding up the recent *TIME* magazine showing the lovely body of a pregnant woman with the inscription beside her that read, "How the First Nine Months Shape the Rest of Your Life" (Murphy Paul, 2010). His plea was, "Where is APPPAH in this article?" He went on to point out that we were not even mentioned in the article and APPPAH had so much information to offer. I felt the burning desire to do something about that, to help the world know more about all of the contributions APPPAH has to share.

Once again APPPAH's board members went to work on diligently moving the important information about the conscious baby out into the world. I want JOPPPAH readers to know that much has been, and is being, done. APPPAH's education department has created several wonderful programs. The pre- and perinatal psychology educator program (PPNE) in just three years, has served over 260 students worldwide who are studying PPN and applying it to their work in this field. In 2013 APPPAH also became actively involved with coming to know more about the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN/SDGs).

In 2016 APPPAH was involved with five countries in forming the Childhood and Early Parenting Principles manifesto (CEPP's). That initiative was launched at the UN in February of this year. The goal of the initiative is to gather together as many of the organizations working "from the ground up," like International MotherBaby Childbirth Organization (IMBCO), Bumi Sehat Foundation, Global Force for Healing, and others who wish to support this effort. Supporting this effort with the smaller organizations lends strength and unity to the larger organizations such as the WHO, UNICEF, International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO), and others that are working "from the top down." Together we can all work to push the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ahead in order to improve the lives of mothers, fathers, and young children throughout the world.

The Childhood and Early Parenting Principles manifesto (CEPPs) is designed to form a multi-sectorial mobilization and engagement with governments at all levels to improve support for mothers, fathers, and other caregivers in their nurturing role during pregnancy, birth, infancy, and the early years of childhood. CEPPs aims to do for mothers and young children what the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEP) manifesto has done for women in the workplace. It is a simple set of seven principles that form the basis for a unified multi-sector and multi-stakeholder engagement with governments at all levels. The single most important aim is to ensure that every child receives nurturing care from conception through the first three years of life.

It has been rather fun for me to take a moment to think back to the commitment that Robbie Davis-Floyd asked each of us in APPPAH to make so many years ago. I hope that seeing and reading about some of the work we have been doing will stimulate you to also go forth and put your stamp onto a piece of this great work. Today most of us are thinking about what we can do actively to influence and improve our world, our part of the globe. I encourage you to take Robbie's words and mine to heart and become active in this wonderful work of improving care for the babies who will hopefully save our planet.

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