

Brief Commentary Forty Years with Infant Mental Health: Some Reflections for the Future. A lens from USA

By Tova Walsh, Ph.D., M.S.W., Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin, USA

Hi Fitzgerald has identified six critical directions for the infant mental health field to continue building on the advances of the past 40 years. One of these directions is to expand research on the impact of men/fathers on early child development. As Hi articulates so well, recent decades have seen an increase in attention to the ways that fathers contribute to children's lives, health, and development. Men's own physical and emotional health and wellbeing, as well as the nature of their involvement with their children and their children's other caregivers, are influential.

As someone who studies men's experiences across the transition to fatherhood, and interventions to support and strengthen early father-child relationships, I share Hi's recognition that the impact of fathers on early development is an important area for continued investigation and understanding. In particular, this research should include and address diverse family constellations, and we must prioritize the incorporation of our findings into practice.

It is a tenet of our field that the parental capacity to nurture an infant or young child is dependent on the extent to which the parent is supported and nurtured, and this is true regardless of the parent's gender or marital status. As we seek to learn more about the role and contribution of fathers, we must attend to the wide range of cultural and social norms for fathers and fathering, and structural barriers to involvement faced by vulnerable and marginalized fathers. And as our understanding of these realities grows, we must reflect and act to expand inclusion of fathers in our work with infants, young children and families in ways that respond to the needs and circumstances of diverse fathers and families.

Brief Commentary Forty Years with Infant Mental Health: Some Reflections for the Future. A lens from Sweden

By Catarina Furmark, clinical psychologist, PhD student Karolinska Institute Stockholm and former chair of the Nordic Association for Infant Mental Health

- How to find ways to translate our science and convey its practical meaning to policy makers, program developments and the legal community.

Hiram Fitzgerald provides an excellent summary of the interdisciplinary field of infant mental health whilst challenging us to reflect on the future. The article offers many "ports of entry" and I have chosen to comment on its very last point – the need to translate existing science and convey its practical meaning to politicians and policymakers.

Even though existing science on the rapid, sensitive, and relationship-dependent brain- and behavioral development of infants indeed is no longer new, there is still a lack of recognition of its significance. The actual concept of mental disorders in infancy is widely unrecognized, as Lyons-Ruth and colleagues point out (2017). Increased knowledge on the impact of mental ill health in infancy and how to promote infant mental wellbeing has still not been matched by increased funding, prioritizing or impact on social policy despite the importance of this knowledge, and "the costs, financial and social, of its failure to do so" (Leach, 2017).

One can easily feel defeated by efforts to change policy, only to experience policy makers reluctance or inability to change – despite their often good intentions. However, we now more than ever need policies that reflect the knowledge we have about how to promote parental and infant mental well-being, support

sensitive parenting, increase resilience in families, reduce societal costs and reap the benefits to society when it acts accordingly. What we can do, is with ever renewed efforts, carry on. And, defeat does not automatically mean we have been unsuccessful (Jansson, 2007). When we make the effort to try and change policy, we can sensitize and educate people who may not have been aware of the issue of infant mental health. While this result may not be what we had initially hoped for, it may pave the way for later successes.

We must find the particular times, when the political and/or psychological climate is right for policy change. To be successful, we can adopt the strategy of the "eight P's" (Meredith & Dunham, 1999). We need to *plan* well, using a strategic planning process. We must *prepare*, including doing all the necessary research and becoming experts on existing policies. We need to cultivate *personal contacts* with policy makers, other change agents, and anyone else necessary. Not easy, as the turnover of staff means that the personal contact you had last year, is no longer working in that particular office. We need to take the *pulse* of the community, that is to find out what our families need, to know where to start in order to be successful. We do need a certain amount of *positivism*, framing policy changes and outcomes in a positive way. We need each other, we need *participation* of everyone affected by or concerned with the issue in planning and implementing policy change. We may use *publicity* for our effort in general and for our suggested policy changes in particular. We need to stay *persistent*, not to give up but to monitor and evaluate our actions and keep at it for as long as necessary.

Finding ways for changing policies are not always easy. They are time-consuming, they rarely seem to yield any tangible results, and any efforts need to be repeated over and over again. They can be draining. That is why we need our community. WAIMH as an organization, with its international scientific and clinical community, and its affiliates, has high credibility. There are efforts already as Hiram Fitzgerald mentions in his article; WAIMH's position paper on the rights of infants being one (WAIMH, 2016). This paper has been presented to the Swedish Board of Welfare and to the Department of Welfare in 2017 by members of the Nordic Affiliation. These efforts should continue and be ongoing. The members of WAIMH and affiliates are the appropriate leaders in campaigns for changes in policy. Keep calm and carry on!

References

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Tribute Celebrating Hiram Fitzgerald: Forty years with Infant Mental: A lens from USA

By Joy Osofsky, Past President of WAIMH, Professor of Pediatrics, Psychiatry, and Public Health Head, Division of Pediatric Mental Health, Barbara Lemann Professorship of Child Welfare, New Orleans, USA

It is both an honor and a pleasure to share my thoughts about Hiram (Hi) Fitzgerald. Hi is not only a pioneer and major leader in the infant mental health field, but also, he is also a very special person. While we had known each other for many years, those who read this tribute may not know that my first major endeavor with Hi Fitzgerald was to collaborate to create the World Association for Infant Mental Health (WAIMH) which resulted from a merger of the World Association for Infant Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines with the International Association for Infant Mental Health. It was a wonderful

collaboration where we both assumed leadership for the newly established organization with me as President and Hi as Executive Director. I very much enjoyed this period of time working and collaborating with Hi helping to build the field that is now widely recognized as Infant Mental Health because of his skill, finesse, great problem-solving ability and clear direction, all of which were important to move forward. While the work was hard with frequent challenges, it was an exciting joint adventure together with the international Board of Directors in broadening the perspective of WAIMH into a truly multidisciplinary international organization.

I am sure that those who know and have worked with Hi understand what a pleasure it is to be able to call him a close colleague, fine collaborator, and warm friend. I learned quickly that we share a similar style of working, that is, being available most of the time, responding quickly to correspondence, emails and phone calls, and believing that even very challenging situations coming from different cultural perspectives are solvable. In other words, Hi and I agree with the adage that if you need something to be done quickly and well, you should turn it over to a very busy and competent person. I will share a brief story related to my respect for Hi in problem solving that required an immediate and creative response. I was editor of the *Infant Mental Health Journal* at the time that Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans on August 29, 2005 with the breach of the levees. Fortunately, the IMHJ office then located with the editor just sent an issue to press in mid-August. In 2005, we still had paper files for the Journal, all of which were then sitting in our filing cabinets on the 3rd floor of my flooded and deserted office building in the flooded city. It was impossible to retrieve the files in New Orleans so Hi and I started to “problem-solve” and figure out how we could retrieve submissions, those that were under review, and start to digitize the journal. Somehow, with Hi’s ingenuity, hard work, and again awesome collaboration, we accomplished that work before the next issue was due to go to press! How we did it would not have been possible without Hi’s persistence and resourcefulness – and true collaboration!

I am confident that those of you who know Hi will agree that he is a very accomplished psychologist, academician, researcher, teacher, and administrator. While his many professional accomplishments are well respected, I have also very much admired his commitment to his family as a devoted husband, father and grandfather who has always been very involved with family

life, taking much pride in his children and grandchildren, and sharing his love of family with others. I was extremely impressed and touched that as Hi decided to begin a new chapter in his life, his family established the Hiram E. Fitzgerald Engaged Scholar Endowment Fund to help students carry out work that “transforms the human experience.” I am very fortunate to have Hi Fitzgerald as a wonderful collaborator and friend, and I join my WAIMH colleagues and friends in wishing him much satisfaction and pleasure in the next important phase of his life.

Tribute Celebrating Hiram Fitzgerald: Forty years with Infant Mental: A lens from Australia

By Rochelle Matacz (Clinical Psychologist, IMH Specialist (IMH-E[®]) and Lynn Priddis (Clinical and Counselling Psychologist), Perth, Australia

Hiram Fitzgerald,

Leaped into our lives with his larger than life presence at a time when our university was looking for overseas professors to build research capacity.

I had of course seen Hiram from afar at WAIMH congresses on panels with people whose names were all stars to us. Rochelle had spent time with Hiram in Ireland as he helped establish the Irish Affiliation of IMH and was a keynote speaker of Ireland’s inaugural conference on IMH in 2006. When we considered who to bring out to Australia to help build a research profile in PIMH we sought advice from Debbie Weatherston who without hesitation, immediately recommended Hiram. We proceeded to set about investigating the university systems and processes required to support this if indeed it became a reality and not just a fantasy. Together Rochelle and I bravely sent an invitation to Hi to visit the university for three months and to do this for 2 consecutive years, since in Australia we have a plethora of people who fly in and fly out and leave little impact or