
A personal experience of the WAIMH Edinburgh Congress: Presenting a poster and being part of the WAIMH Interview Project

By Angela McLaughlin (PhD Candidate, University of Edinburgh)

Angela has recently joined the WAIMH's editorial team of Perspectives with a specific focus on encouraging Masters and/or Doctoral students to share their work with the wider WAIMH family by contributing to the column on Perspectives. In addition, Angela has established the Butterfly Baby Clinic (www.ButterflyBabyClinic.com). If you would like to connect with Angela she would be delighted to hear from you. You can contact her via her website or email: angela@butterflybabyclinic.com

The WAIMH World Congress 2014 is an experience that will always remain close to my heart, not only because it was hosted in my academic hometown of Edinburgh. It was my first realisation that I was part of a wonderful and warm extended professional family with each member contributing something very special to the world of babies. My personal experience of the congress was made all the more memorable because I both presented a poster of my PhD research and was also part of the small team interviewing some of the most prominent members of WAIMH about their contributions to our field.

Many of the interviewees were not necessarily old in terms of chronological age, but the wisdom they had to share was beyond their years. Putting age aside, the experience felt akin to sitting at the fireside whilst a parent or grandparent told stories from the past about their lived experiences, dearest memories and departed guidance about how to navigate the path that may lay ahead for us. It reminded me of traditional storytelling where family history is passed from one generation to the next through the magical experience of connecting eye to eye, mind to mind and heart to heart.

The WAIMH Interview Project was a personally enriching experience and professionally inspiring one. I consider myself honoured to have heard many of those stories first-hand and will look forward to sharing those stories, and those created by my peers, with the next generation of infant mental health

professionals who will join our family in years to come. The experience has also left me with a sense that creating a mentorship programme, where early career infant mental health professionals can be nurtured by veteran members, would ensure that the next generation get the best possible start... just as we aspire to provide for the babies and families we work with.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank, once again, all of the interviewees who allowed me to listen to their very open and honest stories about their personal and professional life-journeys as I filmed the interviews. I would also like to say a special thank you to those who allowed me to interview them directly: Hiram Fitzgerald, Peter Fonagy, Joy Osofsky, Colwyn Trevarthen and Deborah Weatherston; many of whom are founding members of WAIMH. Tribute is also paid to Kevin Nugent who created the idea of conducting the WAIMH Interview Project during the congress in Edinburgh. I also want to acknowledge the hard work and commitment shown by my peers who collectively conducted the interviews and are preparing the footage and transcripts to allow this wonderful collection to be shared with the wider WAIMH family: Jessica Bartlett, Christine Bartram and Aditi Subramaniam. Gratitude is also extended to the School of Health in Social Science, University of Edinburgh, for offering hospitality for many of these interviews to be conducted.