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

By Julie Ribaudo, Clinical Professor of Social Work, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

Yes, yes, yes and yes. Reading Fitzgerald's (2020) paper left me nodding throughout. Yes, of course humans grow and change throughout their lifetime. Yes, indeed, my own father mattered tremendously. He metaphorically sat with me through many a session as I engaged with fathers interacting with their babies and young children, alert to the ways I might unwittingly impose my gendered expectation of parenting, all the while recalling the thrill of the games (e.g., "hide and go seek" in the dark) my father played with us that heightened our tolerance for anticipation and excitement.

Yes, culture matters tremendously. We don't know what we don't know until we know it. Culture shapes what we "know" and don't know. And yes, indeed, resilience is fostered through proximal and distal relationships. As Bretherton reminded us (1992), Bowlby once wrote, "Just as children are absolutely dependent on their parents for sustenance, so in all but the most primitive communities, are parents, especially their mothers, dependent on a greater society for economic provision. If a community values its children it must cherish their parents" (Bowlby, 1951, p. 84).

Early in my training I was taught to ask, "what would the baby say?" As I finished Fitzgerald's cogent analysis of what remains to be attended to in protecting infant mental health, I wondered what the baby would say. One plea might be: "teach the teachers." The comprehensive approach Fitzgerald outlines will require novel and creative ways of teaching, training and supervising practitioners, researchers, and policy makers. Many institutions of higher education have yet to develop true interdisciplinary education. Continuing to train in our siloed fashions

will only further contribute to an emphasis on the very modalities of intervention and research that are limiting our capacity to move the field further. Research funding models that favor lab-based randomized controlled trials vs. community-based, "person-oriented longitudinal studies/analyses" inhibit creative, cross-cultural, intensive understanding of the lived experience of babies and the families and communities that care for them. Only with paradigm shifts encouraged at the university level will we train the next generation of practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to think with the wisdom Fitzgerald so generously offers.

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