

CONFERENCE REPORT

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY CONFERENCE OF HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY (ISCHP): GRAHAMSTOWN (EAST LONDON), SOUTH AFRICA 12 TO 15 JULY 2015

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The International Society Conference of Health Psychology (ISCHP) which was held at Grahamstown from the 12 to 15 July 2015 at Rhodes University was the first international academic conference that I attended. I was delighted when they informed me that my abstract was accepted to be presented at an international conference pending resubmission and that they had granted me the bursary that was to cover the conference fee, workshop fee, transport and accommodation during the

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conference. I resubmitted the abstract as requested and awaited for the day to arrive. The thought of traveling to a place I had never been to also was exciting. The conference began at the final day of the national Arts festival, which I heard a lot about and hoped I could arrive in time and have a glimpse of it. Unfortunately this did not transpire as I had to attend a workshop on neoliberalism upon my arrival. I had the luxury of meeting people with great minds and could critically tackle neoliberalism and its effects on individuals in academia.

This excited me as a junior professional in research and academia as I could envision myself in other spaces such as this one in the future where demographic and social dynamics would be taken into consideration when discussing social and health problems. Since the event was to be my first international conference I had mixed emotions about it. I wondered what exactly is it that I had to contribute to the conversation on critical health psychology. What is it that I had to tell people from all walks of life, better yet well accomplished and prominent scholars in the field of psychology and health? These throbbing questions in my head made me worry about the quality of my presentation as this conference was a big platform for me and all was paid for, thus the pressure to perform. With these thoughts in my mind I worked hard to deliver a good and interactive presentation but the nerves had the better of me. I think the richness of the data and the contradictions embedded in it made it easy for engagement and to also think about the resistance towards policies that are implemented on health issues such as termination of pregnancy. Apart from my own anxieties and worries, the conference was a well-planned event. The few presentations I managed to attend were on disability and shame, if keeping fit equals lack of disease and ethical issues when conducting health research amongst others.



This conference turned out to be an amazing easy event with lots of parties for interaction and networking and constructive feedback for my presentation. It was not as full as I imagined an international conference would be. However, it was a great space for academic inspiration as the keynote speakers Leslie Swart, Michelle

Fine and Garth Stevens gave significant addresses on issues of critical health in psychology, disability and on the concept of precarity. One other thing that made this event spectacular was the (Miners shot down) Marikana documentary that made everyone to think about the precarious positions that the working class in South Africa hold. This precarity was further emphasized in a staged drama on service delivery which also depicted the lives of most South African poor people which invoked thoughts about contextualized social problems that are rooted in capitalism as a unit of analysis. They also gave us pens that were USB's and had about five documentaries in them about initiation schools, backstreet abortions, asylum seekers and traditional healing practices which were very interesting and thought provoking to watch as they were all multilayered and told different stories about knowledge that is marginalized or misrepresented. I particularly enjoyed the entertainment band that played classic from Africa, The Caribbean (Jamaica) and Europe at the gala dinner as it made me imagine different places and time invoked by music. Having Lesego Ramphole, my colleague and Boshadi Semenya, my mentor made this a phenomenal event as we hit the dance floor. It was indeed one in a million thought provoking experience!

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE



Molobela Lee Reabetswe is a Masters intern at HSRC in the HSD research programme (Pretoria). She is currently enrolled for a master's degree in research psychology at Unisa. She completed both her undergraduate and honours degree in psychology at the University of Limpopo (Turf loop). She has worked at Unisa as a post graduate research assistant and at the Aurum institute as a research assistant. Her fields of interest are sexuality, racism, reproductive health and justice, HIV/AIDS, gender identity, land reform and restitution, Black feminism, power, African epistemologies, decolonization and discourse analysis. Molobela Reabetswe has presented in local and international conferences, the most recent being the International Society of Critical Health Psychology held in July 2015 at Rhodes University.