

# Reflections on CREATE 2019

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It is argued that “the best science comes from international collaborations” (Adams, 2013). International collaboration between psychology research teams have exponentially risen, including the implementation of student and scientist exchange programmes (Kliegl & Bates, 2010). Research collaboration improves research quality, scientific production, and knowledge creation (Coccia & Wang, 2016). Over the decades, EHPS executive committees have incorporated building relationships and collaborations within the conference. This includes supporting CREATE workshops for early career researchers (ERCs) before the conference, which aims to improve research skills and to connect international researchers in similar career stages. We hold testimony to this, as we collaborate to narrate our experiences of EHPS 2019.

The atmosphere on the first day of the CREATE workshop was one that fostered creative interaction through innovative icebreakers, which was organised by the executive committee. The pre-workshop networking session was spent becoming acquainted with one another’s research areas and interests. We began this in one of the conference hotels, during which the structured aspect aided the progression from there to the beautiful inner city of Dubrovnik. Here, the group took to the streets, led by a charismatic Croatian tour guide, where the rich history of the city was delved into (not forgetting the odd Game of Thrones reference).

After two hours of getting to know one another



and the shiny marble slab tiles, the 40-odd group split into a few streams, not based as much on research interest, but more so cuisine of preference at the time! There was a grand regrouping that evening, during which drinks and interests were shared amongst one another. This opportunity to get to know each other helped greatly in promoting a positive atmosphere in which to ask questions and debate during the intensive two-day workshop.

On the first full day of the workshop, we met our workshop facilitators, both from the National University of Ireland, Galway. What better experts to teach about systematic reviews but Dr. Jenny McSharry and Dr. Chris Noone – both distinguished in their expertise of research synthesis. We began by introducing our own research areas to our facilitators, which spanned across many different areas within health psychology. What followed was an interactive exercise whereby we established where we, as a group, stood with our understanding and knowledge of conducting systematic reviews. We got to discuss our faith in

the process as a means of synthesising research, and heard from some workshop participants that had prior exposure to this method. This diversity of know-how further bolstered the peer-to-peer learning within the workshop, whereby participants engaged in enthusiastic discussion with the workshop facilitators about different approaches to systematic reviews. These conversations spilled over into our coffee breaks, and indeed lunches, as we had ample opportunity to get invaluable guidance and feedback from the two subject experts.

The brilliance of CREATE is that it allows different stages of ECRs to gain insight and advice from other researchers, alongside helping establish promising working relationships with fellow health psychologists. In fact, this form of academic-peer support, which we were encouraged to advance throughout the workshop, is considered key in satisfaction with postgraduate study (Tompkins, Brecht, Tucker, Neander & Swift, 2016). As such, the CREATE dinner was a huge success, where we all got to delve deeper into individual and collective experiences of research at this early stage of our careers. Stories from different universities and countries were shared, and a broader dialogue of the challenges faced at both PhD and postdoctoral level were discussed – time-keeping, varied research interests, and methodological difficulties were debated, reflected upon, and worked through.

For many workshop attendees, this EHPS was their first international conference, and the veterans of CREATE assisted in allowing us to all interact in a well-planned, yet relaxed atmosphere. Throughout the week of the conference, groups of 'CREATERS' met up and socialised together, further promoting the networking aspect of EHPS, as new and former colleagues mixed. With new friendships formed and a wave of confidence from the workshop, we navigated our way through our first EHPS conference. It was fulfilling to attend talks by psychologists that have inspired our research, and equally exciting to listen to talks by fellow

CREATERS, who delivered with passion and intellect.

CREATE provided further excellent opportunity in the "Meet the expert" event. I was fortunate to meet keynote speaker Prof Rona Moss Morris, with a small group of four ERCs. She spoke honestly and elegantly about the sheer hard work she gives to her research, about her key career moves, and work-life balance. She gave thoughtful advice to each of us at varying stages of our career. For ECRs, meeting experts is invaluable to understand that there is no set academic career pathway and to humanise research.

We would like to thank CREATE facilitators Dr Jenny McSharry and Dr Chris Noone from the National University of Ireland, Galway for making



systematic review training encouraging, engaging, and offering extended support post workshop. The CREATE executive committee have again exceeded expectations in organising the workshop, and especially for providing ample opportunity for ECRs to meet, connect and forge collaborations and friendships. We are grateful to the EHPS executive committee for supporting ECR capacity building through CREATE. We look forward to attending the next CREATE workshop on "Digitalising Health Psychology research to enhance our science", and reconnecting with familiar faces.

## References

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