

# Passing on the Torch: Using the arts to facilitate intergenerational dialogue promoting the transmission of LGBTQ+ cultural knowledge, memory, resilience, and resistance

WRoCAH funded Collaborative Doctoral Award between York Law School, University of York and LGBT Foundation



## Lead Academic and Partner Organisation Supervisors

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## Project summary

Despite great progress in lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ+) rights over 60 years, many LGBTQ+ people still face discrimination. Current cohorts of older LGBTQ+ people have unique perspectives on resisting legal and social oppressions. However, ageism in LGBTQ+ communities creates barriers to the intergenerational transmission of their memories and insights. This project will use arts-based methods to build dialogue and forge intergenerational solidarity among LGBTQ+ communities, promoting the transmission of LGBTQ+ cultural knowledge about resilience, resistance and activism in response to legal and social oppressions.

## PhD Project description



The project aims to build dialogue and forge solidarity and cohesion across generations of LGBTQ+ community members so as to promote the transmission of LGBTQ+ cultural knowledge relating to resilience, resistance and activism

in response to legal and social oppressions.

There has been a raft of key legal changes for LGBTQ+ people in the UK over the past 60 years, creating a range of recognitions, equal rights and protections from discrimination. These changes have not been without setbacks. Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 (which endured until the early 2000s) prohibited local authorities from “promoting” homosexuality, creating a chilling effect particularly in schools, where many teachers remain confused to this day about whether they are allowed to discuss LGBTQ+ rights and families.

Despite the dramatically changed legal environment, many LGBTQ+ people still face discrimination in their everyday lives, from bullying and harassment in schools, to workplace discrimination, to homophobic and transphobic attacks, and discrimination in health and social care. The importance of this project stems from recognising that legal rights which have been secured need continuous protection, while substantive equalities beyond law still need to be achieved. Protection and realisation of rights emerge as necessarily ongoing processes which will benefit from LGBTQ+ rights activism informed by intergenerational dialogue.

Older LGBTQ+ people, who lived most of their lives before and during these legal changes, have unique insights to offer about resisting legal oppressions, forcing legal change, and experiencing the impact of those legal changes firsthand. Ageism in the LGBTQ+ community creates intergenerational barriers which impede the transmission of cultural memories and histories. It is vital to promote intergenerational storytelling ‘as a developmental resource in LGBTQ+ communities’ enabling the transmission of intergenerational wisdom and bringing additional wellbeing benefits associated with increasing belonging, sense of identity and support.

The project will address the following key research question: How can arts-based facilitated intergenerational dialogue promote the transmission of LGBTQ+ experiences, histories, cultural memories and insights and wisdoms about resilience, resistance and activism aimed at addressing legal and social oppressions? To this end the following subsidiary questions will be explored:

1. How have older generations of LGBTQ+ people promoted and experienced changing legal frameworks across their lives?
2. How do younger generations of LGBTQ+ people understand and perceive changing legal frameworks over recent decades and the role of older generations in effecting change?
3. What do older and younger generations of LGBTQ+ people see as key legal and social inequalities which still need to be addressed and how?

The research will involve mapping relevant legislation across the past 60 years, whilst drawing on an extensive literature review, empirical data collection via arts-based focus groups with single- and cross- generational groups of LGBTQ+ people, analysis of primary data and dissemination via a range of outputs. The project partners have a strong commitment to intersectionality, recognising diversity among and between those collectivised under the LGBTQ+ umbrella. The successful student candidate will have scope to mould the project by refining the research questions, the underlying theoretical underpinnings beyond intersectionality which they might wish to embrace (e.g. transformative justice theories), and in relation to how to employ arts in the data collection and dissemination processes.

### **About LGBT Foundation**

LGBT Foundation is a national LGBTQ+ health and wellbeing charity. Since 1975 the organisation has been at the forefront of LGBTQ+ rights, working to ensure that every LGBTQ+ person has a voice, feels valued, and can live their lives free from discrimination. LGBT Foundation's "Pride in Ageing" programme addresses social, economic and legal issues concerning LGBTQ+ people over 50. "Community members engaged with the "Pride in Ageing" programme have expressed a keen interest to develop intergenerational fora where they can contribute to ongoing work on LGBTQ+ equalities, and actively discuss how to 'pass on the torch' of activism to future generations. This studentship responds directly and creatively to the project partners' need and will benefit both LGBT Foundation as a whole, and the "Pride in Ageing" programme in particular. It will provide creative opportunities for LGBT Foundation's members to participate in 'pass on the torch' intergenerational discussions, aided, augmented and promoted through arts-based workshops. In promoting dialogue between generations of LGBTQ+ members, the project will break down barriers, promote reciprocal understanding and support, and facilitate the transmission of cultural knowledge, memory, resilience, and resistance across LGBTQ+ generations.

### **Engagement, outreach, dissemination and impact initiatives**

This project has been designed collaboratively by the project partners ( Dr Westwood, Mr Lawrence Roberts and Professor Ioana Cismas, Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York (second academic supervisor) building on previous close research partnerships between them. Our commitment to co-production in all stages of the research - data collection, engagement, outreach and dissemination - stems from an understanding that centring the voices of those researched is essential for the project to achieve its desired impact. Throughout the lifespan of the project, the student will produce the following outputs:

- Website and social media features about the focus groups with single- and cross- generational focus groups with LGBTQ+ people. These will be

hosted on the website and social media accounts of the LGBT Foundation website, York Law School and the Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York.

- Digital stories featuring people belonging to various generations of LGBTQ+ activists published on the YouTube channels of the partner organisations. Digital storytelling is an arts-based research method conducive to co-creation between researchers and participants which enriches the data gathered and allows for deeper understanding of the findings and wide dissemination among policy stakeholders and the general public.
- End-of-project report with photographic images and quotes. Hard copies will be sent to key stakeholders.
- Video and photographic display in Manchester Library, and round-the-country visual roadshow.
- Webinar and academic conference presentations.

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## **Financial support**

Studentships for doctoral research are 40 months in duration for full-time study. Awards are subject to satisfactory academic progress. Awards must be taken up in October 2025; no deferrals are possible as this is the final round of recruitment to WRoCAH CDAs. Awards will comprise fees at Research Council rates and a tax- and national insurance-free maintenance grant (£20,780 in 2025/26). The grant pays the fees at the Home/UK rate; international students are, however, eligible to apply for this Studentship. Awards may be taken up on a part-time basis if a student is eligible to undertake part-time study; international applicants may be required to study full-time under the terms of their visa.

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## **Qualifications**

Strong applicants will have a good first degree in an appropriate subject, as well as a Master's degree (or be working towards one), usually at Distinction level, and/or professional/lived experience relevant to the scope of the project. We are looking for a well-qualified student, probably with a background in any of the following disciplines: gender and sexuality studies, gerontology, law, politics, sociology, social policy.

## **Requirements of the Studentship**

This opportunity is being offered as a full time studentship but part time study may be an option subject to agreement with the supervision team.

WROCAH students are required to undertake a bespoke training package and to complete a Researcher Employability Project of at least a month and a Knowledge Exchange Project.

All WROCAH students must submit their thesis for examination within the funded period. This is a requirement of the Arts & Humanities Research Council, which provides the funding for WROCAH, and is a condition of accepting a Studentship.

Before applying for any WROCAH Studentship, please first ensure that you have read the WROCAH webpages about the WROCAH training programme and requirements, as well as other funding opportunities

<http://wrocah.ac.uk/>

### How to apply

By 12 noon Wednesday 5 March 2025, applicants are required to submit to WROCAH an Expression of Interest, which should include:

1. A CV with details of academic qualifications
2. A covering letter comprising a two-page statement to convey your motivation and enthusiasm for the project, and to demonstrate your suitability for your intended PhD studies with the University and Project Partner.

*The covering letter should specifically highlight the following:*

- Your interest in the project and details on why you have chosen that University and Project Partner.
  - How you will apply your current skills, knowledge and experience to undertake a PhD and the approach you would take to develop the project.
  - How the project fits into your career plans and ambitions.
- 17 March 2025: decision on short-listing  
The short-list of candidates to be invited for an interview will be announced on Monday 17 March 2025.

- *Short-listed candidates must complete a PhD programme application before interview.* If you are short-listed for an interview you will be sent details of how to apply for a place at the University of York. At that point you will need to submit the names and contact details of two referees, copies of transcripts of your academic qualifications and (if applicable) an IELTS certificate.
- 7-30 April 2025: interviews

Interviews will involve the academic supervisor, Project Partner supervisor and a member of the WRoCAH Studentships Committee. They will be conducted online.

**For more information about this project contact**

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