

## **Blog Post – Summer 2 | Julie Dory | Laidlaw Cohort 2021 | Trinity College Dublin**

One of the challenges/barriers that I had listed in my initial proposal for the Laidlaw Leadership in Action project was that I may face difficulty in creating a space for people to open up and be vulnerable in, and whilst this continued to be a point of anxiety throughout the duration of my second summer, the disastrous scenario I had countless envisioned could not have been further from what eventually came to be the reality.

My Leadership in Action project relied entirely upon community and the involvement of other people – in fact, this was its purpose. It was composed of two elements and sought to platform seldom heard Queer voices – for the most part the ageing Queer community in Ireland.

The crux of the project was also its greatest risk – there was the risk that people would not open up, would not engage – and that there ultimately would have been no publication, and no event. This risk factor and element of fear has certainly almost interrupted a lot of my previous work and has hindered progress and speed undoubtedly – and whilst I have usually persevered regardless, I haven't seen the true benefit of feeling the fear and doing it anyway since a lot of my work has been on individual academic projects. However, in completing Summer 2 of the Laidlaw programme, especially in organising and hosting the event on Queer lives across generations and intergenerational engagement, I experienced what it means for something to mean something to people – what it means for somebody to have their voice not only heard, but listened to. I had been working towards the goal of completing the project because I believed in its importance and benefit, but also because I had set a goal and it needed completing.

On the day of the event, I was a nervous wreck. I was preoccupied with numbers and logistics, and as soon as it began and conversation flowed, I realised just how important and just how fortunate I was to be holding space with these individuals. One of the speakers,

Daíthí, reminded me that the most valuable thing was to be in conversation – to be exchanging ideas and hopes. Numbers and logistics melted away – what we shared was a room of open hearts, shared emotions, and hope for our futures. I was taught to trust and to continue allowing for control to be taken from me in a way that permits others to own their own stories. What comes with this is also an incredible sense of responsibility. I feel it is a duty that I respect what has been shared and continues to be shared with me, and it is important that I take this to go forward and ensure that the stories, histories, beliefs, and hopes are carried into the future.