Thinking Outside the Frame: Conceptualizing the Impact of Funded Art Research

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Overview

- Context
  - SSHRC’s Research/Creation Grants Program
  - Evaluation of research and research impact
  - Study goals and objectives

- Methodological Approach
  - Data sources
  - Qualitative data analysis

- Conceptual/Analytical Framework
  - Towards an evaluation tool

- Conclusions
  - Strengths and limitations of the approach
  - Implications/applications for evaluators and stakeholders
  - Future research directions
SSHRC’s mandate is to:
- Promote and assist research and scholarship in the social sciences and humanities (SSH);
- Advise the Minister on issues related to SSH research.

Pilot program launched in 2003 to support research/creation projects within all fine arts disciplines:
- Bridge the gap between fine arts disciplines and link the humanities more closely with the arts communities
- Address lack of federal funding for this community
- Tap into potentially transformative nature of research
- 3 competitions between 2004 and 2007; a total of 91 grants awarded to artist-researchers, for a total of CAD$13.8M
What is Research/Creation?

- Any research activity or approach to research that forms an essential part of a creative process or artistic discipline and that directly fosters the creation of literary/artistic works.
  - The research must address clear research questions, offer theoretical contextualization within the relevant field or fields of literary/artistic inquiry, and present a well considered methodological approach.
  - Both the research and the resulting literary/artistic works must meet peer standards of excellence and be suitable for publication, public performance or viewing.
NoBody Dance (Époque, UQAM)
Evaluation of Research and Research Impact

- **Significant developments in field of research evaluation over past two decades**
  - But much of the knowledge base relates more specifically to evaluation of science and technology or health research

- **Particular challenges related to evaluation of research in the social sciences, humanities and arts**
  - Current lack of adequate models, indicators, impact measurement tools
  - Recognition of the differences between social sciences, humanities and arts and the need for different approaches to impact measurement
  - Recent efforts internationally have contributed to stronger foundation for research evaluation in these fields, including practice-based disciplines

- **Important implications in current context where impact evaluation and determination of causal effects of programs is being promoted/enforced**
Study Rationale and Objectives

- **Study rationale**
  - During the formative evaluation of the pilot program, clearly defining and articulating the outcomes and impacts of research/creation was challenging for both the artist-researchers consulted and the evaluation team.
  - Formative evaluation recommended further work, prior to summative evaluation, to better define and to develop adequate measures to demonstrate the impact of funded research activities.
  - Study fits within larger umbrella of activity around capturing impacts of SSH research.

- **Study objectives**
  - To develop an approach leading to a conceptual/analytical framework of the impacts of research/creation in the arts.
  - To support the development of a new and more adequate tool for impact assessment of art-based research.
Methodological Approach

- Analysis of theoretical/conceptual approaches
- Methodological approach and work plan
- Literature review on research/creation and fine arts impacts
- Analysis of secondary sources & draft conceptual/analytical framework
- Revisit roundtable workshop & web survey data from the formative evaluation
- Conceptual/analytical framework & analysis of impacts in research/creation
- Integration/revision of previous stages
- Analysis of websites, final research reports & revised framework
- Analyze websites & final research reports
- Revisited evaluation evidence & revised framework

Legend:
- Final report
- Internal technical document
- Research process
Methodological Approach

- **Qualitative data analysis**
  - Open coding of impact captured in data sources on 2 levels:
    1. Groups on which the impacts have an effect (and where)
    2. Categories/types of impact
  - Distinction was made between changes that occurred as a result of R/C funding vs. impact of R/C activities and outputs

- **Development of conceptual/analytical framework**
  - A visual framework was developed based on the connections and interactions between these groups and types of impact
  - Iterative and collaborative development over 4 months: each draft integrated new and complementary evidence drawn from data sources, and addressed feedback on limitations and issues raised by previous drafts
Final Conceptual/Analytical Framework

 HOW (FUNDING) | OUTPUTS | WHO | WHAT IMPACTS & HOW | WHERE

Research/Creation Outputs

K. Mob. | Collaboration | Capacity

Academic institutions

Academic sphere

Specific funding | Public/Private funding

Public

Policy-makers

Artist-researcher

Academic peers

Students

Practitioners

Public

Private

Transformation & recognition of the artist-researcher

Growth of knowledge base

Exploring & redefined practice

Development & recognition of research/creation

5. Knowledge mobilization

6. Collaboration

Within and between disciplines, sectors (academic & professional) and countries

7. Technology

8. Personal (audience)

9. Cultural

Shape, support & celebrate Canadian culture

10. Economic

11. Social

12. Policy

5/13/2010
Common Plants (Rudakoff, York University)
How does funding have an impact on R/C and its outputs?

- Funding in R/C has an impact on means (funds and time), legitimacy (symbolic worth), and capacity to produce R/C outputs.
- Funding also increases opportunities for collaboration and dissemination.
- Thus, R/C grants also contribute to increasing the reach and breadth of the impacts of R/C outputs.
- Outputs of R/C are highly varied (e.g., tacit/embodied or formal).
Who is affected?

Where do impacts occur?

- Individuals affected by R/C in the short- and long-term, as shown by the ripples (“Who”)
- Characterizing who is affected and where impacts can occur will help guide the measurement of impacts
- The boundary between the academic and non-academic spheres is porous: these spheres are in close contact (two-way interactions) and impacts in both spheres have value
What are the impacts of R/C?

How do they occur?

- 12 categories of impacts (“What”), emerged from the analysis based on their prevalence and value
- Feedback loops (“How”) represent the processes and interactions between the impact categories
- Central role of structuring and/or enhancing impacts: knowledge mobilization and collaboration situated between academic and non-academic spheres
Towards an evaluation tool – adding the time element

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Artist-researcher</th>
<th>Academic peers</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Academic institutions</th>
<th>Practitioners</th>
<th>Industries</th>
<th>Community org.</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Government</th>
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- **Short-term impact**
- **Longer-term impact**
Conclusions

- **Strengths of the approach**
  - Grounded in systematic inquiry and validated by stakeholders
  - Generated increased understanding of broad range/reach of impacts of R/C (both funding and R/C itself)
  - Contributed to better understanding of R/C as a practice-based discipline within the SSH

- **Limitations of the approach**
  - Attribution of impacts to funded projects is a perennial issue
  - Impacts on end-users and overall social, cultural and socio-economic impacts not explored
  - Capturing vs. measuring impacts
Conclusions

- **Implications/applications for evaluators and stakeholders**
  - Impact is a multi-dimensional concept (space, time, etc.)
  - Impact taxonomy adapted to other disciplines/areas of inquiry
  - Help evaluators within academic institutions to better conceptualize/assess the impact of these disciplines and generate buy-in among R/C community

- **Future research directions**
  - Testing of framework through evaluation
  - Implications of porosity/overlap
  - Contribution of R/C to social/economic impact of the arts
  - Comparison with impact of other practice-based disciplines
Acknowledgements

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  - Laura Lugg, Arts and Humanities Research Council (Bristol, United Kingdom)
Full report available at:

Stages of development of the conceptual/analytical framework
### Disciplines funded by SSHRC’s Research/Creation Program

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<tr>
<th>Disciplines</th>
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<tr>
<td>Architecture, Urban and Regional Design and Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cinema, Film Studies and Video</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communications and Media Studies</td>
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<td>Creative Writing</td>
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<td>Dance</td>
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<td>Design</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>Fine Arts</td>
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<td>Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary arts</td>
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<td>Literature</td>
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<td>Media Arts</td>
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<td>Music and Musicology</td>
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<td>Social Sciences and Humanities</td>
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<td>Theatre and Drama</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
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Profile of Full-Time Faculty and Graduate Students in Canada

Proportion of faculty (2004-05)
- CIHR - 17%
- NSERC - 29%
- SSHRC - 54%
  20,520*

Proportion of graduate students (2005-06)
- CIHR - 10%
- NSERC - 35%
- SSHRC - 55%
  53,870**

Total funding (2008-09)
- CIHR - 40%
- NSERC - 45%
- SSHRC - 15%
  $323.5M

*2,490 “artist-researchers” (based on 2002 data)
**1,812 graduate students in arts-related disciplines (based on 2002 data)
Source: SSHRC using Statistics Canada data and SSHRC administrative data

2008-09
Art and Culture (Research Areas):
  16% (51.4M)
Research/Creation Grants:
  1% (3M)
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