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

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Overview

- Context
  - Evaluation of research and research impact
  - SSHRC’s Research/Creation Grants Program
  - 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
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
Evaluation of Research and Research Impact

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

- An emerging challenge for SSHRC (and other funding councils that support arts and humanities research): evaluating impacts of research/creation

  - The findings of the formative evaluation of SSHRC’s Research/Creation Grants in Fine Arts Pilot Program suggest that there is a need to better define the impacts of these types of programs and to “obtain richer information on outputs, impacts, and outreach of research/creation activities”
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.
  - Must address clear research questions, offer theoretical contextualization within relevant field(s) 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.
  - Different from traditional creative arts practice and traditional academic research because it combines elements of the two.
  - Also called “art-based research”, “practice-led/based research”, “research in the arts”.

SSHRC Definitions (www.sshrc.ca)
SSHRC’s Research/Creation Grants in Fine Arts Pilot Program

- Pilot program designed in 2003 to support research within all fine arts disciplines (including contemporary arts and design) to:
  - Support high-quality research/creation in projects that advance knowledge in the fine arts and artistic production in Canadian postsecondary institutions;
  - Develop graduate and undergraduate art students’ research skills;
  - Facilitate the dissemination and presentation of high quality work to a broad public; and
  - Foster collaboration among university- and college-based artist-researchers, other academic researchers, and professional artists

- Three competitions between 2004 and 2007
  - A total of 91 grants awarded for a total of $13.8M

- Program was evaluated during, and will be again, at the end of the pilot phase
Disciplines funded by SSHRC’s Research/Creation Program

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<th>Disciplines</th>
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<tr>
<td>Architecture, Urban and Regional Design and Planning</td>
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<td>Cinema, Film Studies and Video</td>
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<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>Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary arts</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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<td>Visual Arts</td>
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NoBody Dance (Époque, UQAM)
“Rethinking and Redefining Social Housing in the City Centre” Contest (Cormier, Université de Montréal)
Profile of Full-Time Faculty and Graduate Students in Canada

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

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

- **Total funding (2008-09)**
  - CIHR: 40%
  - NSERC: 45%
  - SSHRC: 15%
  - Total: $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

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2008-09

- **Art and Culture (Research Areas):**
  - 16% (51.4M)

- **Research/Creation Grants:**
  - 1% (3M)
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

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

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

- Qualitative approach: Open coding of impact data
- Multiple lines of evidence, multiple data sources
  - Literature review (peer-review papers and grey literature)
    - 35 documents were reviewed covering:
      a) arts research in the academic setting (16 doc.)
      b) impacts of research in the arts more generally (6 doc.)
      c) social impacts of the arts (8 doc.)
      d) examples/case studies on the research impacts in the arts (5 doc.)
  - Revisit web survey and roundtable data from the formative evaluation
    - Web survey: 64 funded and 104 unfunded artist-researchers
    - Roundtable workshop: 13 funded artist-researchers
  - Web scan of funded artist-researchers and final research reports
    - Project websites, professional/personal websites, and other related web-based sources: 12 funded projects
    - Final research reports of 6 SSHRC-funded artist-researchers
Animated Quilt (Berzowska, Concordia University/Hexagram)
Web scan data extraction: XS Labs (Berzowska)
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
Development of the conceptual/analytical framework
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

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<th>Artist-researcher</th>
<th>Academic peers</th>
<th>Students</th>
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<th>Practitioners</th>
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- **Blue** 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
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