ASSESSING THE INTRINSIC IMPACTS OF A LIVE PERFORMANCE

Commissioned by 14 Major University Presenters

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ABSTRACT

Assessing the Intrinsic Impacts of a Live Performance attempts to define and measure how audiences are transformed by a live performance. The study's research design consisted of a pair of questionnaires – one administered in-venue just prior to curtain, and the other sent home with the respondent and mailed back. The first questionnaire collected information about the audiences' mental and emotional preparedness for the performance. The second questionnaire, related to the first by a control number, investigated a range of reactions to the specific performance, including captivation, intellectual stimulation, emotional resonance, spiritual value, aesthetic growth and social bonding. Between January and May 2006, six presenters surveyed audiences at a total of 19 performances representing a cross-section of music, dance and theatre presentations. This report builds on recent literature to address several hypotheses: 1) that the intrinsic impacts derived from attending a live performance can be measured, 2) that different types of performances create different sets of impacts, and 3) that an audience member's 'readiness-to-receive' the art affects the impacts received. The study develops a simple measurement tool to assess impact, provides an analytical framework for considering the results, and suggests how performing arts presenters might begin to use this information to select programs that create specific benefits for their constituents.

With special thanks to Edward Pauly, The Wallace Foundation's Director of Research and Evaluation, for provoking us to consider that even the most subjective constructs can be measured – if they can first be described.

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The WolfBrown research team was assisted by Gerald D. Yoshitomi, facilitator of the MUP consortium.

ABOUT THE STUDY

Assessing the Intrinsic Impacts of a Live Performance is part of a larger multi-method collaborative research effort called The Values and Impact Study, commissioned in 2005 by a consortium of 14 major university arts presenters (MUP). The study was self-initiated and completely self-funded by the consortium. Their foresight and significant financial commitments made this research possible. Oversight of the study was provided by a committee consisting of the six marketing directors of the Lead Partner institutions, noted below.

Lead Partners

The Lead Partners took shared responsibility for data collection for this study. The very high response rates and consequent depth of the survey sample is solely their achievement.

University of Florida Performing Arts, Gainesville
Deborah Rossi, Assistant Director for Marketing (co-chair)
University Musical Society, Ann Arbor, Michigan
Sara Billmann, Director of Marketing & Communications (co-chair)
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, University of Maryland
Brian Jose, Director of Marketing & Communications
Lied Center for Performing Arts, University of Nebraska – Lincoln
Laura Levy Sweet, Director of Audience Development
Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts, University of California – Davis
Shelly Gilbride, study liaison
ASU Gammage, Tempe, Arizona
Michael Porto, Communications Director

Associate Partners

The Associate Partners assisted greatly in helping to finance the study and in providing feedback on drafts of the protocols.

Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, University of Pennsylvania
Cal Performances, University of California – Berkeley
Center for the Performing Arts, The Pennsylvania State University
*Hancher Auditorium, University of Iowa
Hopkins Center for the Arts, Dartmouth College
Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, University of Illinois
*Lied Center of Kansas, University of Kansas – Lawrence
Stanford Lively Arts, Stanford University
*Ontario Presenters Network

**Several of the Associate Partners replicated the impact survey research subsequent to the publication of this report.*

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OVERVIEW

Performing arts organizations, historically, have had difficulty articulating their true impact. In the absence of other measures, board members, staff and funders often rely exclusively on demand metrics such as ticket sales and attendance figures to gauge success when, in fact, their missions define success in very different terms.

While no one disputes the wisdom of fiscal prudence based on demand metrics, the primary outcomes of arts experiences are not economic. Performing arts organizations, of course, are in the business of transforming individuals and communities through arts experiences. Unlike commercial airlines which evaluate their performance based on "passenger miles" flown, arts groups cannot understand their impact based on the number of performance minutes logged by audience members.

The true impact of performing arts experiences is what happens to individual audience members when the lights go down and the artist takes the stage – and the cumulative benefits to individuals, families and communities of having those experiences available night after night, year after year. If this is true, it would seem that efforts to assess the impact of arts programs would aim to better understand and measure how audience members are transformed – what happens to them in their seats.

Notwithstanding the evaluation efforts undertaken by funders and the occasional satisfaction and economic impact surveys fielded by arts groups, alternative systems for measuring impact are conspicuously missing from the arts practitioner's everyday toolkit. A larger issue in some arts organizations is a lack of interest in impact assessment, or an outright hostility towards holding art accountable to measurable outcomes. Programming decisions are the provenance of highly skilled curators and artistic directors who prize their artistic autonomy and often do not see a role for impact assessment in their program planning model.

However, more and more attention is being paid to the intrinsic benefits of arts experiences. In the United States, this is largely due to the efforts of the Wallace Foundation in commissioning the RAND report *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate about the Benefits of the Arts*, which catalogs and organizes the various benefits of arts experiences and argues that future research should focus on intrinsic benefits. In the U.K., John Holden, in his report *Capturing Cultural Value – How Culture has become a Tool of Government Policy*, argues persuasively that undue emphasis on instrumental benefits, like economic impact and higher test scores among children, has corrupted the cultural system and provided a false sense of purpose. Both reports call for new language and new measurement systems focused on intrinsic impacts.

Quantitative evidence of non-economic impact is scarce, although anecdotal evidence is abundant.[1] Through their facial expressions, body language and audible reactions, audiences communicate impact as it is happening. There is no mistaking the silence of rapture during a concert, the moments of shared emotion in a theater when the plot takes a dramatic twist or the post-performance buzz in the lobby. All are reliable evidence of intrinsic impact. But soon after the moment of impact, the

[1] Generally, the arts education field is much farther ahead of the performing arts field with respect to assessing the intrinsic impacts of arts experiences and, in fact, has even published an agenda for future research. See *The Arts and Education: New Opportunities for Research*, Arts Education Partnership, www.aep-arts.org

lobby empties, the audience returns home and the experience fades into memory – perhaps to be accessed at some future time, perhaps not.

Every once in a while, one hears a story about how attending a performance changed someone's life. These stories echo through families and communities, but are seldom culled and collected.[2] Storytelling, when harnessed for business purposes, can be a powerful means of communication. But is evidence of intrinsic impact strictly the domain of anecdotes, or is there a system of measurement that will tell the story of impact more conclusively?

In planning this study, consideration was given to investigating three levels of intrinsic impact:

1. The intrinsic impacts of an entire arts system on its community
2. The cumulative intrinsic impacts or "value footprint" of an institution on its community
3. The intrinsic impacts of a single performance on an individual

Valuable research is underway in the first category – assessing the arts' impact on quality of life, particularly the work of The Urban Institute's Arts and Culture Indicators in Community Building Project (ACIP)[3], which has set forth a framework for future research and measurement principles that should guide the work. Much good thinking in this vein also has come from the Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) at the University of Pennsylvania.[4]

Several studies have quantified a performing arts organization's "footprint" on its community, at least from a participation standpoint. For example, a recent study of orchestra audiences suggests that some orchestras have served, at some point in the past, as many as 35% of all adults in their local market.[5] Longitudinal studies that would track the cumulative intrinsic impacts of a performing arts organization's programs on its constituents cannot be found. How does one go about measuring the long-term emotional and intellectual benefits, for example, of attending three or four world music concerts a year over ten years? Such research would involve tracking of respondents over many years and also would involve general population research at the community level, which is costly. Even then, it would be very difficult to establish causality. For these reasons, this category of impact was ruled out for the present study.

Therefore, we chose to investigate impact on the individual attendee immediately after the performance, while the memory is still fresh. The study partners were ideally situated to assist with data collection at a relatively low cost. Moreover, we found that some of the study partners were beginning to re-think how they select artists. The performance impact research would be of specific use to those among the study partners who are migrating towards benefits-based programming (i.e., selecting artists with specific intrinsic impacts in mind). The study also builds upon previous research

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[2] Another part of the Value and Impact study, not dealt with in this report, is an effort to explore how storytelling can be used to accumulate anecdotal evidence of impact.

[3] See *Culture Counts in Communities*, by Maria-Rosario Jackson, Ph.D., and Joaquin Herranz Jr., 2002, and also *Art and Culture in Communities: A Framework for Measurement*, Policy Brief No. 1, 2003, and *Cultural Vitality in Communities: Interpretation and Indicators*, 2006, by Maria-Rosario Jackson, Ph.D., Joaquin Herranz Jr., and Florence Kabwasa-Green, published through the Culture, Creativity and Communities Program of The Urban Institute, www.ccc.urban.org.

[4] *Culture Builds Community – The Power of Arts and Culture in Community Building*, Mark Stern and Susan Seifert, Social Impact of the Arts Project, University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, www.sp2.upenn.edu/SIAP

[5] *Classical Music Consumer Segmentation Study*, 2002, conducted by Audience Insight LLC for the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and 15 orchestras

conducted by the authors, especially the Connecticut *Values Study*[6] and work with the Wallace Foundation around arts benefits. Much of our resolve in tackling this work – and trying to measure what some believe cannot (or should not) be measured – comes from the RAND work and from words of encouragement from Wallace Foundation staff, for which we are most grateful.

Purpose of Study

This study builds on previous research and theoretical literature to empirically measure the short-term benefits, on an individual level, of being in the audience for a performing arts program. The study explores pre-performance anticipation, expectations and familiarity – the individual's "readiness-to-receive" the art – as well as the individual's self-assessment of his or her own impressions of, reactions to, and satisfaction with the performance.

The aim of this work is not solely to demonstrate that intrinsic impacts can be measured and used as evidence of impact and mission fulfillment, but to provoke discussion about how this information might be used by presenters in understanding the consequences of their programming choices and reaching higher levels of effectiveness in their work.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

The study's design and analytical approach serve to explore and test the following three hypotheses:

1) Intrinsic impacts derived from attending a live performance can be measured
2) Different types of performances create different sets of intrinsic impacts
3) An individual's 'readiness-to-receive' a performing arts experience influences the nature and extent of impacts.

To test our hypotheses, we ask the following research questions:

1) What vocabulary should be used to talk about intrinsic impact?
2) Do patterns of impact emerge across performances, genres or presenters?
3) Does a patron's "readiness-to-receive" the art act as a precondition for the types and magnitude of impacts derived from the experience?
4) Does attendance at enhancement events influence the impacts an individual experiences?
5) What is the relationship between impact and satisfaction?

During the study, numerous other research questions emerged, which are discussed throughout the report.

Methodology and Response Rates

A pair of questionnaires was developed to measure an audience member's readiness-to-receive the art (Part I, administered in-venue just prior to curtain) and the intrinsic impacts received from the performance (Part II, sent home with the respondent and mailed back). Specifically, the first questionnaire collected information about motivations for attending and the respondent's mental and emo-

[6] *The Values Study: Rediscovering the Meaning and Value of Arts Participation*, commissioned by the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism and conducted by Alan S. Brown & Associates, 2004

tional preparedness for the performance. The second questionnaire, related to the first by a control number, investigated a range of reactions to the specific performance.

Between January and May 2006, the six Lead Partners in the study surveyed audiences at a total of 19 performances representing a cross-section of music, dance and theatre presentations ranging from the Kirov Orchestra to a performance of the popular Broadway show *Mamma Mia!*. A total of 4,269 survey packets were distributed across the 19 performances. The response rate was 74% for Part I – the highest response rate ever experienced by the consultants for a survey of this nature. Of these respondents, 61% also returned Part II of the survey, yielding a net response rate of 46%. A subset of these surveys were collected from pre-performance enhancement event attendees (i.e., people who attended pre-concert lectures, etc.), to allow for comparison of those who attend enhancement events with those who don't.[7] The primary data set includes 1,730 paired responses from randomly-selected audience members. Among the 19 performances are two pairs of artists – two presentations of Soweto Gospel Choir (UFPA and UMS) and two presentations of the LA Theatre Works' production of *The Great Tennessee Monkey Trial* (UFPA and UMD), which allow us to compare results for the same program in different locations.

Presenter	Artist(s)	Pre-Performance Enhancement Event[8]	Discipline
ASU	Daniel Bernard Roumain	---	Music
ASU	James Garcia's *Voices of Valor*	---	Stage Play
ASU	*Mamma Mia!*	---	Musical Theater
ASU	Ronald K. Brown/Evidence	---	Dance
Mondavi	Grupo Corpo	Lecture	Dance
Mondavi	London Philharmonic	Lecture	Music
Mondavi	The Acting Company's *Macbeth*	Lecture	Stage Play
UFPA	Alvin Ailey Amer. Dance Theater	---	Dance
UFPA	LA Theatre Works's *Great Tennessee Monkey Trial*	Lecture	Stage Play
UFPA	Soweto Gospel Choir	Lecture	Music
UMS	Kirov Orchestra	Symposium	Music
UMS	Pappa Tarahumara[9]	---	Multidisciplinary
UMS	Soweto Gospel Choir	---	Music
UMD	Joe Goode Performance Group	---	Dance
UMD	LA Theatre Works's *Great Tennessee Monkey Trial*	Lecture	Stage Play
UMD	Opera Lafayette	Discussion	Music
UNL	Aquila Theatre Company's *Hamlet*	Lecture	Stage Play
UNL	Jake Shimabukuro	Lecture	Music
UNL	Royal Winnipeg Ballet	Lecture	Dance

[7] See page 26 for a detailed breakdown of response rates for the random audience and enhancement event samples.
[8] Several of the presenters did host post-performance enhancement events; however, these events were outside the scope of this study.
[9] Please note that Pappa Tarahumara was listed as part of UMS' dance series.

Key Constructs

The analysis revolves around three constructs for readiness-to-receive, measured prior to the performance, and six constructs for intrinsic impact, measured post-performance, as follows:

Readiness Constructs

1) **Context Index**. The Context Index offers a composite picture of how much experience and knowledge the individual has about the performance and the performers.
2) **Relevance Index**. This indicator measures an individual's comfort level with the performance experience – the extent to which they are in a familiar situation, socially or culturally.
3) **Anticipation Index**. The Anticipation Index characterizes the individual's psychological state immediately prior to the performance along a continuum from low expectations to high expectations.

Impact Constructs

1) **Captivation Index**. The Captivation Index characterizes the degree to which an individual was engrossed and absorbed in the performance.
2) **Intellectual Stimulation Index**. This impact area encompasses several aspects of mental engagement, including both personal and social dimensions, which together might be characterized as "cognitive traction."
3) **Emotional Resonance Index**. This index measures the intensity of emotional response, degree of empathy with the performers and therapeutic value in an emotional sense.
4) **Spiritual Value Index**. The Spiritual Value Index addresses an aspect of experience that goes beyond emotional/intellectual engagement and assesses the extent to which the respondent had a transcendent, inspiring or empowering experience.
5) **Aesthetic Growth Index**. This indicator characterizes the extent to which an individual was exposed to a new type or style of art, or otherwise stretched aesthetically by the performance.
6) **Social Bonding Index**. The Social Bonding Index measures the extent to which the performance connected the individual with others in the audience, allowed her to celebrate her own cultural heritage or learn about cultures outside of her life experience, and left her with new insight on human relations.

We have considered and rejected the notion of producing a single, solitary measure of impact. Inevitably, such a metric would lead to an overly reductive interpretation of something that is inherently multi-dimensional. Not all performances should be expected to generate impacts across all six areas, and one must be careful not to assume so. For example, one would not necessarily expect Aesthetic Growth outcomes for the audience at a Broadway show. The reader is cautioned not to interpret the results in terms of "winners and losers," but rather as a means of understanding the dimensionality of impacts.

Summary of Findings

Overall, results from the study are quite intuitive and support the first hypothesis, that intrinsic impacts can be measured. The major qualification to this conclusion is that the various indicators of intrinsic impact are strongly correlated, suggesting a high degree of interdependence and symbiosis. For example, a high correlation was observed between Emotional Resonance and Spiritual Value. Although the indicators tend to move together, the extent to which they are independent is significant enough to capture important nuances of impact as suggested in the theoretical literature.

Readiness to Receive

Results from the first questionnaire paint a detailed picture of respondents' readiness-to-receive the art just prior to the performance. Audiences at several performances reported significantly higher levels of context on the performers and works of art about to be performed, including audiences at UMD's presentation of Opera Lafayette, UMS's presentation of the Kirov Orchestra and UFPA's presentation of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Contrariwise, audiences at UMS's presentation of Pappa Tarahumara, ASU's presentation of Daniel Bernard Roumain and Mondavi's performance of Grupo Corpo reported significantly lower levels of context. While high levels of context cannot be proven to cause higher levels of impact (i.e., variability in the quality of the performance mitigates a direct relationship), there is a positive correlation. Overall, the data suggest that audiences with higher levels of context *can* benefit more from performances, at least in certain circumstances. We like to think of context as grease on the wheels of impact.

Our objective in creating a Relevance Index was to assist in identifying audience members who are "fish out of water," so to speak – people who may not go to performances very often, or who lack a social support structure for arts attendance. As might be expected, results indicate that most ticket buyers opt into performing arts experiences that reinforce their cultural identity and validate their preferences and tastes. It is interesting to note that three classical music audiences scored highest on the Relevance Index, suggesting that they are most at-home in their seats waiting for the concert to start. In contrast, audiences at ASU's presentation of Daniel Bernard Roumain and UNL's presentation of *Hamlet* reported the lowest levels of relevance.

From an audience development standpoint, the Relevance Index for an audience might be considered as an outcome metric, even before the performance starts. In other words, through effective marketing and outreach, presenters have achieved their mission to some extent in getting individuals to attend events that lie outside of their "cultural comfort zone," whether the program is a Broadway show or a contemporary Brazilian dance company.

By and large, audiences reported high levels of confidence that they will enjoy the performance. They wouldn't be in the audience if the event hadn't already passed a relevant test (or several). Audiences for UFPA's presentations of Soweto Gospel Choir and Alvin Ailey and for UMS's presentation of the Kirov Orchestra were most likely to report high levels of anticipation and focus. All three were repeat engagements on their campuses. Since 52% of those surveyed at the Ailey performance had previously seen the company, one might reasonably expect higher anticipation levels. In comparison, only a quarter of the Soweto Gospel Choir audience had seen the group before, but this audience reported the highest figures for anticipation of any of the 19 audiences surveyed – 75% were "very confident" that they would enjoy the performance. Further analysis suggests that a variety of factors may contribute to high levels of anticipation, including the marketing methods used to attract audiences and the ethnic/cultural alignment of artist and audience. Presenters would be well-served to carefully consider what programming and communications strategies are likely to create anticipa-

tion, as the expectation of an enjoyable experience is the single best predictor of a satisfying experience in our data.

Intrinsic Impacts

Respondents answered a battery of questions about various intrinsic aspects of the performance they attended – questions, perhaps, that they had never before been asked. Again, results are quite intuitive and clearly support our second hypothesis that different programs create different intrinsic impacts.

Captivation

Captivation is the lynchpin of impact. In interviews, performing arts attendees talk enthusiastically about "getting lost" in the performance or "going to another place." They idealize the state of consciousness described by Csikszentmihlyi as "Flow."[10] While the pursuit of "Flow" may be a subconscious endeavor and not something that enters into the decision process for selecting performances to attend, results of the study suggest that achievement of "Flow" or high levels captivation are closely linked to higher levels of satisfaction. For this reason, we have come to think of captivation not only as a desired outcome with intrinsic worth independent of other impacts, but as a precondition for other impacts to occur – or at least a co-factor that potentiates other impacts like Emotional Resonance and Spiritual Value. Two questions were designed to investigate Captivation at two levels:

- Degree to which the respondent was absorbed in the performance
- Extent to which the respondent inhabited the world of the performers, lost track of time and forgot about everything else[11]

Audiences at the UFPA presentation of Soweto Gospel Choir reported the highest level of Captivation (62% were "completely" absorbed in the performance), while audiences for Mondavi's presentation of The Acting Company's production of *Macbeth* reported the lowest Captivation level (3% were "completely" absorbed). The range is quite dramatic. The audience for Alvin Ailey reported the second highest Captivation level (59% "completely" absorbed).

Among the six impact indicators, the Captivation Index correlates most highly with all indicators of satisfaction. This leads us to ask, "What factors lead to higher levels of Captivation?" On one level, the artist's quality of performance and the work of art itself most certainly shape an audience member's Captivation level. Some works of art are more powerful than others, and thus are more likely to draw audiences into the consciousness of receptivity and openness required to fully benefit from a performance. These factors are generally beyond the presenter's control, except to the extent that the presenter can select programs and artists who are more likely to achieve higher levels of Captivation. A variety of situational factors may also influence Captivation, such as the temperature in the theater, the comfort of the seating and the lighting in the hall. Finally, the composition and character of the audience itself (e.g., experience level, ability to empathize with the artist or content) may influence Captivation. This would help to explain why the same program in two different locations generates substantially different levels of Captivation, as was the case in our data set.

[10] Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 1990, published by Harper & Row
[11] Predictably, the two indicators moved together, with the second one being the more stringent test.

Intellectual Stimulation

Some hold that college and university presenters, in their academic settings, should play a prominent role in the intellectual life of their campuses and communities, perhaps more so than other types of arts presenters. If this is true, then measures of Intellectual Stimulation seem to be appropriate performance indicators. Six questions in the protocol investigated subtly different aspects of mental engagement:

- Extent to which the respondent was engaged by the performance on an intellectual level
- If the respondent was challenged or provoked by an idea or message
- If the performance caused the respondent to reflect on her own opinions or beliefs
- If the respondent 'got' what the artist was trying to convey
- If the respondent left the hall with unanswered questions
- If the respondent discussed the meaning or merits of the performance with others who attended

Overall, 42% of all respondents across the 19 performances said that they left the hall with unanswered questions that they would like to ask the performers or creators of the work. Results for this question ranged from a high of 75% for the Lied Center's presentation of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet in *The Magic Flute* (a non-traditional interpretation) to a low of 13% for ASU's presentation of *Mamma Mia!*. What does it mean that so many audience members leave with unanswered questions? While this may be considered as a positive sign of cognitive traction and intrinsic impact, it also begs a larger question of presenters: What can be done to satisfy their curiosity? Where can they go after the performance to discuss their questions?

A large majority of respondents (87%) discussed the meaning or merits of the performance afterwards, although just 19% characterized their discussion as an "intense exchange." As presenters and other arts organizations increasingly turn to engagement strategies as a means of deepening audience involvement, perhaps this indicator (i.e., percent who report an "intense exchange" after the performance) might become a useful outcome measure.

Results for the composite Intellectual Stimulation Index are both intuitive and counterintuitive. Audiences at performances of *The Great Tennessee Monkey Trial* at both UMD and UFPA reported higher than average ratings for Intellectual Stimulation, along with audiences at the world premiere of James Garcia's *Voices of Valor* presented by ASU Gammage. Both of these theatrical events challenged audiences to think about race issues. UMS's presentation of Pappa Tarahumara also produced interesting results in this impact area. Audience members at this presentation were least likely to report that they "got" what the artists were trying to convey, very likely to leave with unanswered questions, and most likely to have an intense conversation about it afterwards. On a composite level, their Intellectual Stimulation score was below-average, although certain indicators of intellectual engagement were very high.[12]

Less intuitive, and perhaps even profoundly counterintuitive, is that the UFPA Soweto Gospel Choir audience reported slightly higher levels of Intellectual Stimulation than the audience for UMS's presentation of the Kirov Orchestra (playing an all-Shostakovich program under the baton of Valery Gergiev). On one level, this may seem improbable. But, if one thinks of Intellectual Stimulation as a desired outcome that occurs independent of other factors, then one can begin to understand how a

[12] In retrospect, the question pertaining to whether or not the respondent "got" what the artist was trying to convey may not be a good indicator of mental engagement, and should probably be dropped from future protocols. For example, *Mamma Mia!* audience members were very likely to report that they "got" what the artist was trying to convey, which, in this case, might not be an indicator of Intellectual Stimulation.

performance by the Soweto Gospel Choir, with its humanitarian subtext, might challenge audiences as much as a thematic classical concert. The similarity in impact between these two very different performances illustrates how the indicators for Intellectual Stimulation level the playing field and allow for comparison of dissimilar experiences.

Emotional Resonance

Art is a conduit for emotion, a vessel for transmitting feelings, beliefs and values between the creators and performers of the work and the audience. Some art is created for the purpose of eliciting a strong emotional response from the audience, and some audience members attend performances with the explicit objective of being "moved." Promotional language used by presenters often accentuates the likely emotional impact of the performance.

The Emotional Resonance of a work of art is considered to be an intrinsic impact of the experience regardless of the nature of the emotion (i.e., joy or despair). Much has been written about the role of emotion in creating and accessing autobiographical memory.[13] In our study, qualitative data from in-depth interviews conducted with audience members at six campuses provides abundant anecdotal evidence of the connection between emotion and memory. Interviewees easily recalled events – some of which happened 30 or 40 years ago – as if they happened yesterday, because of the emotional weight attached to the event. In this regard, emotionally resonant arts experiences can yield intrinsic 'benefit dividends' throughout life. Therefore, the ability to measure Emotional Resonance is a critical aspect of assessing impact. Evidence of Emotional Resonance was elicited in several questions:

- Strength of emotional response (weak vs. strong)
- Extent to which the respondent empathized with one or more of the performers
- If the respondent felt the experience was therapeutic in an emotional sense

Survey results for Emotional Resonance are intuitive and expose some interesting patterns. With respect to the strength of emotional response experienced by the respondent, results ranged from a high of 54% "strong" for UFPA's presentation of Soweto Gospel Choir to a low of 6% "strong" for the Mondavi Center's presentation of The Acting Company's touring production of *Macbeth*. The Florida audience for Soweto Gospel Choir also gave it the highest rating across all 19 performances for being "therapeutic in an emotional sense" (35% "a great deal") followed by the audience for UFPA's presentation of the Alvin Ailey company (24% "a great deal").

Another indicator of Emotional Resonance is the audience member's feelings of empathy towards one or more of the performers. It is interesting to note that the six highest scores for this indicator were given to artists (or companies) of color, including Jake Shimabukuro, the young ukulele player who performed at the Lied Center, as well as the Soweto Gospel Choir, Alvin Ailey company, James Garcia's *Voices of Valor* and Ronald K. Brown/Evidence. Unfortunately, due to the small sample sizes of African American and Latino respondents, we cannot investigate whether higher levels of empathy result when the cultural background of the artist and the cultural background of the audience align, although the general pattern seems to support for this hypothesis.

Audiences at music performances reported higher levels of Emotional Resonance compared to dance and theater audiences. We must be careful, however, not to generalize about all performances from the limited set of 19 performances in our sample. The Emotional Resonance of the Ailey Company is abundantly clear in the data, while the other dance companies were less successful in creating this impact. The majority of stage plays in our sample were based on historical events, which leads us to

[13] *Memory and Emotion*, edited by Daniel Reisberg and Paula Hertel, 2004, Oxford University Press

wonder if audiences for plays or musicals with fictional plots would be more likely to report higher levels of Emotional Resonance.

The delicate alchemy of art, audience and situational factors that make possible a high degree of Emotional Resonance may, in fact, be too complicated to deconstruct in a research experiment. Regardless, the footprint of Emotional Resonance left on an audience member is quite evident and can be assessed immediately after a performance through several simple questions.

Spiritual Value

Part of the value system surrounding arts experiences, at least from the audience's standpoint, relates to spiritual impacts.[14] Qualitative data from in-depth interviews conducted with a cross-section of audience members indicates that some audience members very much hope to be inspired, uplifted or empowered by a live performance and seek out transcendent experiences in a spiritual – but not necessarily religious – sense.[15] Crafting protocol language to measure Spiritual Value was exceedingly difficult, given the close relationship between Captivation, Emotional Resonance and Spiritual Value. In the end, three questions were used to assess the intrinsic spiritual impacts of a performance:

- Degree to which the performance was uplifting or inspiring
- Extent to which the respondent has a transcendent experience
- Extent to which the respondent left feeling empowered

For the first question, the range of responses stretched from a high of 56% "a great deal" for UFPA's presentation of Soweto Gospel Choir to a low of 1% "a great deal" for UMD's presentation of *The Great Tennessee Monkey Trial.* Of course, "feeling uplifted or inspired" is not necessarily an intended outcome for many works of art, either from the artist's perspective or the audience's. Some works of art are meant to provoke or disturb audiences, for example, in which case we would not expect to see this type of spiritual impact.

Audiences at UFPA's presentation of the Alvin Ailey company were most likely to report transcendent experiences, followed closely by the Soweto Gospel Choir audience (20% and 19% "a great deal," respectively). It should be noted that both the Ailey and Soweto programs were based, in part, on inspirational dances and songs. Above-average spiritual ratings were observed for the two orchestra performances, as well as performances that reflect a specific cultural heritage. Theatrical performances, with the exception of James Garcia's *Voices of Valor*, occupied the low end of the spectrum on all measures of Spiritual Value, especially the *Macbeth* performance.

As we begin to discover more about Spiritual Value, it will be interesting to see how different types of music affect Spiritual Value (e.g., gospel choirs vs. the King's Singers, chamber ensembles vs. orchestras), what types of dance and theatre performances create Spiritual Value, and if presenters can enhance Spiritual Value through careful selection of venue (e.g., places of worship).

Aesthetic Growth

Aesthetic growth allows for progressively deeper engagement of audiences and is the primary means of awakening new interests and unlocking additional demand for performing arts programs. Aes-

[14] *The Values Study*, 2004.

[15] Approximately 15% of respondents to a national consumer survey indicate that their religious background or faith influences the types of arts programs that they choose to attend. Source: Major University Presenters Value and Impact Study, online Values Survey, national sample of 615 adults, 2006, WolfBrown (results embargoed until 2008).

thetic growth may not be an intended outcome of many performances – and it may not be an objective of many audience members who prefer familiar art that does not stretch them aesthetically – but it is central to a long-term audience development agenda on the part of the presenter and thus is a key impact area for all of the study partners. Our definition of Aesthetic Growth takes on several meanings:

- Being exposed to a new type or style of art (regardless of whether you like it or not)
- Changed feelings about the type or style of art form (positively or negatively)
- Interest in following the work of an artist in the future
- Being infused with new ideas in a creative sense
- Feeling like a better appreciator of the art form

A performance is not inherently less worthwhile because Aesthetic Growth did not occur on a large scale. For example, only 8% of respondents at the Mondavi Center's presentation of the London Philharmonic indicated that they were exposed to a new type or style of music. Contrast this to the Mondavi Center's presentation of Grupo Corpo, at which 64% were exposed to a new type or style of dance. In this case, the dance presentation served an Aesthetic Growth agenda while the orchestra presentation did not. On average, 35% of all respondents across the 19 performances said that they were exposed to a new type or style of art.

Among all the performers, Grupo Corpo and Jake Shimabukuro were most likely to change the way their audiences feel about the type or style of dance/music presented. Also, these audiences were most likely of all to say that they will follow the work of these artists in the future. These artists succeeded not only in creating fans, but also in changing people's feelings about their respective art forms.

The performances most likely to cause audiences to feel that they'll be more creative in their life, work or artistic endeavors were Alvin Ailey, Soweto Gospel Choir and ASU's presentation of Ronald K. Brown/Evidence (the highest, at 16% "a great deal"). What is most significant here is the relationship between creative stimulation and training in the art form being presented. Respondents who are artists working in the same discipline as the artist (i.e., "training or performance experience" in the art form being presented is "a current activity") were far more likely to say that the performance fuelled their sense of creative possibility. One can reasonably conclude that this type of Aesthetic Growth impact (i.e., creative stimulation) applies mostly to artists in the audience who can watch a performance and see new possibilities for their own work. In a university environment with faculty and student artists, this impact could take on additional importance.

Overall, 70% of respondents across all 19 samples reported leaving the performance feeling better equipped to appreciate the art form in the future. This figure ranged from a high of 85% for Grupo Corpo, Daniel Bernard Roumain and the Kirov Orchestra to a low of 40% for James Garcia's *Voices of Valor*. What is it that makes people better appreciators of the art form? Is it something about the performance, or is it something about the audience member? Respondents with some training in the art form were more likely than those with no training to leave the performance feeling like better appreciators.

Results suggest that Aesthetic Growth can occur when the works of art are new or unusual, and when the audience member is new to the art, regardless of whether or not the art is new or unusual. Hence, stretching the audience aesthetically is not as simple as programming new or unfamiliar artists or pieces for sophisticated audiences. Results suggest that Aesthetic Growth, as an intrinsic impact, also results from attracting new or infrequent attendees to artists and repertoire that are relatively unfamiliar to them. Given the challenges associated with selling tickets to new or unfamiliar artists, results point to the strategic importance of both marketing and programming in achieving Aesthetic

Growth impacts, including programming approaches that create "pathways into the art forms" for new audiences and marketing strategies that motivate and reward trial.

Social Bonding

Much has been written lately about the role of the arts in community vitality and how arts experiences create social capital – the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values that bind human networks into communities. On an interpersonal level, arts experiences deliver social impacts as well, in the form of family cohesion, expanded social networks and an enhanced ability to empathize with others. These benefits do not happen overnight, however. They accrete over time, the cumulative result of many art experiences infused with the intrinsic connections of Social Bonding. It is this Social Bonding that we seek to measure, since so many important interpersonal and community benefits stem from it.[16] Four aspects of Social Bonding are investigated:

- Feeling a sense of belonging or connectedness with the rest of the audience
- Celebrating or sustaining your own cultural heritage
- Being exposed to cultures outside of your life experience
- Gaining new insight on human relations or social issues

Generally, performances with the highest proportions of African American and Latino respondents were most likely to report high levels of connectedness with the rest of the audience. Here we see another layer of value that is possible in situations where alignment of artist and audience occurs. This sense of belonging, however, is not limited to respondents of color. White respondents at the Soweto Gospel Choir performance were far more likely to report higher levels of connectedness with the rest of the audience than White respondents at other performances, suggesting a sense of connectedness in this audience that transcended racial/ethnic boundaries.

Results from the other questions about Social Bonding are intuitive and allow for measurement of the social impacts of culturally-specific programming in two senses: 1) in the sense of providing members of a specific cultural group with an opportunity to celebrate and sustain their cultural heritage (e.g., Soweto Gospel Choir, James Garcia, Alvin Ailey), and 2) in the sense of exposing an audience member to a culture outside of her own life experience (e.g., Grupo Corpo, Pappa Tarahumara, Kirov Orchestra's all-Shostakovich program). In our sample, different performances triggered these two aspects of Social Bonding.

Overall, respondents in the audience for ASU Gammage's presentation of James Garcia's *Voices of Valor* were most likely to report leaving the performance with new insight on human relations or social issues. This performance, along with the UFPA presentation of Soweto Gospel Choir, generated the highest levels of Social Bonding.

Presenters create Social Bonding when they expose audiences to new cultures, when they enable audiences to participate in their own cultural heritage and when audiences leave the performance with a widened perspective on social issues and a deeper understanding of human relations. The social bonding that can result is the very essence of social capital, and it can be measured with several simple questions.

[16] Much of the Social Bonding associated with attending live performances occurs before or after the performance (e.g., going to dinner beforehand, reconnecting with friends at intermission) – aspects of the experience that do not relate directly to the performers or to the art. Our objective in designing this module of questions was to focus instead on social outcomes that are intrinsic to the performance, not ancillary to it.

Satisfaction

The post-performance questionnaire included a module of six questions addressing various aspects of satisfaction, including three questions about satisfaction with specific elements of the production, and three questions about overall satisfaction. Our goal in this regard was to better understand the relationship between satisfaction and indicators of readiness and impact, and to determine if satisfaction questions are necessary in future impact surveys.

Generally, satisfaction levels were found to be highly correlated with impacts, suggesting that they are largely redundant with impact data. Among the indicators of impact, the Captivation Index is most highly correlated with all aspects of satisfaction. Once again, the data leads us to conclude that an audience member's ability to be captivated and to achieve a mental state of "Flow" is key to unlocking higher levels of impact, as well as satisfaction.

On average, only 10% of respondents across the 19 performances felt that their investment of time and money was not worthwhile. Some respondents who indicated dissatisfaction with aspects of the performance still indicated that it was a worthwhile investment, although one wonders to what extent satisfaction levels reflect the audience's need to feel good about their decision to attend. In fact, the analysis allows us to conclude that an individual's level of confidence that the performance will be enjoyable has significant predictive power in relation to the respondent's belief, after the performance, that the investment of time and money was worthwhile. The data seem to suggest that intentionality creates satisfaction (i.e., that satisfaction is, to some extent, a self-fulfilling prophecy).

Perhaps customer satisfaction is too blunt a measurement tool for arts presenters and producers, and maybe this is why so many arts professionals are uncomfortable with simple satisfaction measures. From a sales and service standpoint, feedback on satisfaction with various aspects of the customer experience (e.g., quality of ticket office service, satisfaction with physical aspects of the facility) can be useful. This information can be used to better understand how to improve the *extrinsic* part of the customer experience – everything that happens around the program itself.

When it comes to assessing satisfaction with the *intrinsic* experience, however, satisfaction data are less useful. Two factors mitigate against using satisfaction with 'the product' as a performance indicator: 1) some programs are challenging and may leave audiences unsatisfied in some respects, although these programs may be well within the organization's mission to present, and 2) satisfaction is a proxy for, and an incomplete indicator of, impact received. In other words, satisfaction levels are a good indicator of happy customers, but are not *prima facie* evidence of mission fulfillment.

The six indicators of intrinsic impact represent a new alternative to customer satisfaction measures. By shifting focus to these impact indicators, instead of relying on satisfaction measures that are, most likely, biased by the attendee's pre-conceptions, arts presenters will have better evidence of mission fulfillment, will be better able to communicate with each other about the impacts of touring programs, and will be better prepared to engage with artists and managers in a more objective discussion about outcomes.

Relationships between Readiness and Impact

The final section of the report examines the relationships between the three indicators of readiness-to-receive and the six indicators of intrinsic impact. A variety of correlation and regression analyses were conducted to expose the relationships. Of the three readiness indicators, the Anticipation Index has the most explanatory power over all of the impact indices. Audience members who are focused, excited and confident that they'll enjoy the performance do, in fact, report higher impacts.

Across the six impacts, Anticipation is most predictive of Captivation. This is the single strongest predictive relationship between any pair of readiness and impact indicators. It stands to reason that patrons who arrive in a highly anticipatory state of mind (an emotional condition, as much as an intellectual one) are more likely to forget about their busy lives, lose track of time and be drawn into the world of the performers.

The Context Index – the amount of information and personal experience that the audience member has with the art and artist – is a significant predictor for Captivation, Intellectual Stimulation, Emotional Resonance and Spiritual Value. On average, higher levels of context are associated with higher levels of intrinsic impact in four of our six categories. Here one begins to see how an audience's past relationship with the artist (e.g., Ailey, Soweto, Kirov) and, hence, their level of preparedness for the experience, can lead to higher levels of impact on the emotional/spiritual axis.

The Relevance Index – the extent to which the individual feels 'comfortable in her seat' – is a significant predictor for Intellectual Stimulation and Aesthetic Growth. Since most respondents reported high levels of relevance, the more significant observation here is on the negative side of Relevance: respondents in the lowest quartile of relevance reported significant lower impacts. Implicit in this finding is the challenge that presenters face in creating impacts for these audiences. Getting them in the hall is a triumph of marketing, but offsetting the likelihood of lower impacts is, perhaps, an even greater challenge.

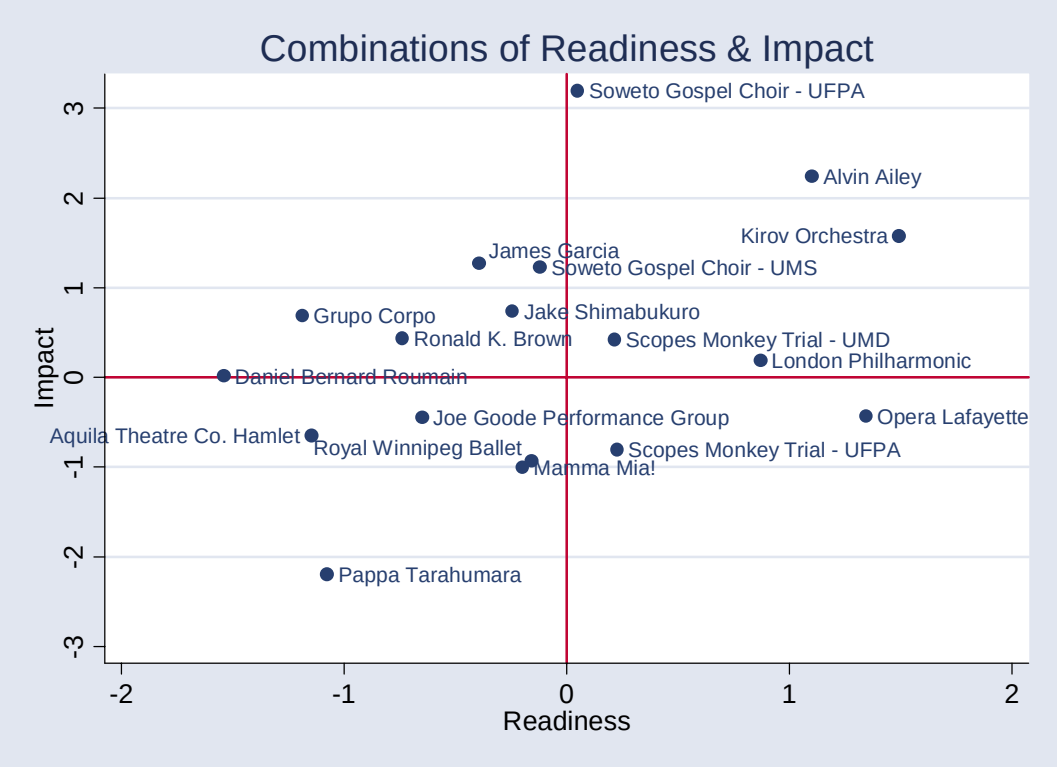
Impact scores and readiness scores were aggregated across the 19 performances, allowing for a final meta-analysis of the relationships between readiness and impact. For the chart on the following page, a single mean score was generated from all three readiness measures and a mean score was generated from all six impact measures; each measure was equally weighted in these calculations. The quadrants in the graph represent the mean scores; the graph plots each show's deviation from the mean scores.

Performances fall into all four quadrants of the high/low impact/readiness matrix. In other words, all four combinations of readiness and impact were observed in the data set (excluding the *Macbeth* performance, which is an outlier in this analysis):

1. Low Readiness, Low Impact: UMS's presentation of Pappa Tarahumara provides an example of how audiences with overall low levels of readiness (although high relevance, in this case) experienced low impact. Another example would be the Lied Center's presentation of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. These examples tend to support our hypothesis that there is a systemic relationship between readiness and impact.
2. Low Readiness, High Impact. ASU Gammage's presentation of James Garcia's *Voices of Valor* and the Mondavi Center's presentation of Grupo Corpo are examples of how audiences with below-average readiness-to-receive reported higher than average impact scores. In these cases, our hypothesis is not supported. Even in situations where audiences exhibit lower levels of readiness, high levels of impact are possible.
3. High Readiness, Low Impact. UFPA's presentation of *The Great Tennessee Monkey Trial* and UMD's presentation of Opera Lafayette serve as examples of audiences that were ready to

receive the art, but reported below-average impact. In these cases, our hypothesis is not supported. Readiness levels did not lead to higher impact levels.

4. High Readiness, High Impact. Three presentations illustrate how audiences with higher than average levels of readiness can report high levels of impact: UFPA's presentations of Soweto Gospel Choir and Alvin Ailey, and UMS's presentation of the Kirov Orchestra. In these situations, our hypothesis was supported. Higher levels of readiness were associated with higher levels of impact.



While our first and second hypotheses were proven – intrinsic impacts can be measured, and different performances create different sets of impacts – our third hypothesis, in the final analysis, is only partially true. Higher levels of readiness-to-receive are not always associated with higher levels of intrinsic impacts. Impact is simply too unpredictable, and too much depends on the performance itself. Even when audiences have moderate to high levels of readiness, they may report low levels of impact (*Macbeth*). In certain situations, however, higher levels of readiness *can* be associated with higher levels of impact (Soweto, Ailey, Kirov). In these situations, higher levels of readiness – especially anticipation levels – seem to magnify impact.

Implications

While most of the findings are intuitive and may seem obvious, they have strategic implications for presenters.

- The data suggest that presenters should focus more on pre-performance engagement strategies in order to create higher levels of anticipation before the performance. Such engagement strategies are strongly indicated as a means of increasing anticipation, which leads to heightened levels of captivation and, therefore, the full range of impacts:

  Anticipation ➔ Captivation ➔ Intrinsic Impacts

  This is not to suggest that post-performance engagement activities are less useful in creating higher impact levels. Other research points to the benefits that can result when audience members talk about a performance afterwards.[17] Overall, the research suggests that artists who are able to spend time in a community prior to their performance (i.e., a residency or advance site visit), or who are able to participate virtually in an advance dialogue with audience members prior to the performance, will contribute to higher anticipation levels and, ultimately, higher impact levels.

- Presenters should consider what steps they might take, in cooperation with artists, to increase the probability that audience members will be drawn into the performance and achieve a mental state of "Flow" and other impacts. The entirety of the audience experience should be re-considered in light of the findings, including the physical aspects (e.g., temperature in the theatre), production design elements (e.g. ambient lighting, sounds, smells) as well as the temporal aspects (e.g., duration of intermissions, if social bonding is a goal).

- Further consideration should be given to expanding efforts to provide audience members with context in advance of the performance (e.g., advance mailing of program notes) or during the performance (e.g., introductions from the stage) as a means of increasing context levels and the chances of higher impact levels. In this regard, results point to further integration of educational objectives into core programming.

- Results point to the strategic role of marketing in creating anticipation, and the importance of messaging effectively and honestly about the impacts that the performance is likely to have. Often, the marketing message is the only preparation that an audience member may have going into the performance.

- As an outcome, Aesthetic Growth may be achieved by programming new or challenging works for sophisticated audiences or by attracting new or infrequent attendees to artists and works that are relatively unfamiliar to them. Hence, both marketing and programming strategies may be employed in achieving Aesthetic Growth impacts, including programming approaches that create "pathways into the art forms" for new audiences, as well as marketing strategies that motivate and reward trial.

- Most audience members report high levels of relevance in reference to the program they are about to see. The data suggest that audiences generally choose programs that validate and

[17] McCarthy, Kevin, et. al. *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate about the Benefits of the Arts*, 2004

reinforce their cultural identity. Therefore, in selecting programs, curators curate not only the art but also the constituency for an arts institution. And constituency definition is the highest level policy decision that an arts organization can make.

- In the future, presenters should shift focus away from measuring overall satisfaction with performances, which can be biased by the need to post-justify the purchase decision, and instead focus on measuring intrinsic impacts.

One might even go so far as to suggest that the results indicate a shift in the traditional role of arts presenters from one of simply marketing and presenting to one of drawing audiences into the experience (i.e., an engagement approach) through a combination of education, outreach, marketing and interactions with artists. The implications are even more profound for artists and their managers, since presenters who accept that intrinsic impacts are the endgame of the presenting business and who adopt an engagement approach will establish new criteria for selecting artists and will create more collaborative relationships with artists and their managers in order to 'curate impacts through artists.' The suggestion that artists can be selected based on their ability to deliver on the presenter's impact agenda – a practice we call 'benefits-based programming' – is a radical departure from the programming practices of many arts presenters. It suggests that presenters should first decide what impacts they wish to create for their constituents (e.g., spiritual value, social bonding), and then select artists, works of arts and engagement strategies that are most likely to deliver those impacts.

In preparing this report, we were constantly reminded of the considerable challenges associated with measuring highly subjective ideas like Captivation and transcendence. Asking simple and intuitive questions about complex and abstract constructs was the central challenge of the study. We hope that others will build on our protocols and further refine and simplify the questions. It is not difficult to imagine a time when a simple two-page questionnaire is administered routinely after performances to gauge impact. The logical extension of this knowledge is that presenters can begin to measure intrinsic impacts season after season and, ultimately, incorporate impact scores into their programming decisions, among other factors.

The premise that intrinsic impacts should be measured merits debate. Artists, managers, presenters, funders and audiences may have differing opinions on the usefulness of this information. We must stress that the impact scores reflect the unique symbiosis between artist and audience at a particular location at a particular moment in time and should not be used as a means of evaluating or comparing artists or the worthiness of their performances. Rather, impact results provide a snapshot of the impression left by an artist on a particular audience – just as a footprint in the sand tells a story.

Assessing the Intrinsic Impacts of a Live Performance is an initial attempt to define and measure intrinsic impacts, and to identify the pre-conditions leading to higher levels of impact. Critical reactions to this work are encouraged. Our greatest hope is that the study will precipitate a rich dialogue about intrinsic impact and the implications of its measurement.