THE ART OF MOVING ON:
Artists and Arts Workers
Who Leave the Arts & Culture

CREATIVE GENERATION

The Art of Moving On: Artists and Arts Workers Who Leave the Arts & Culture

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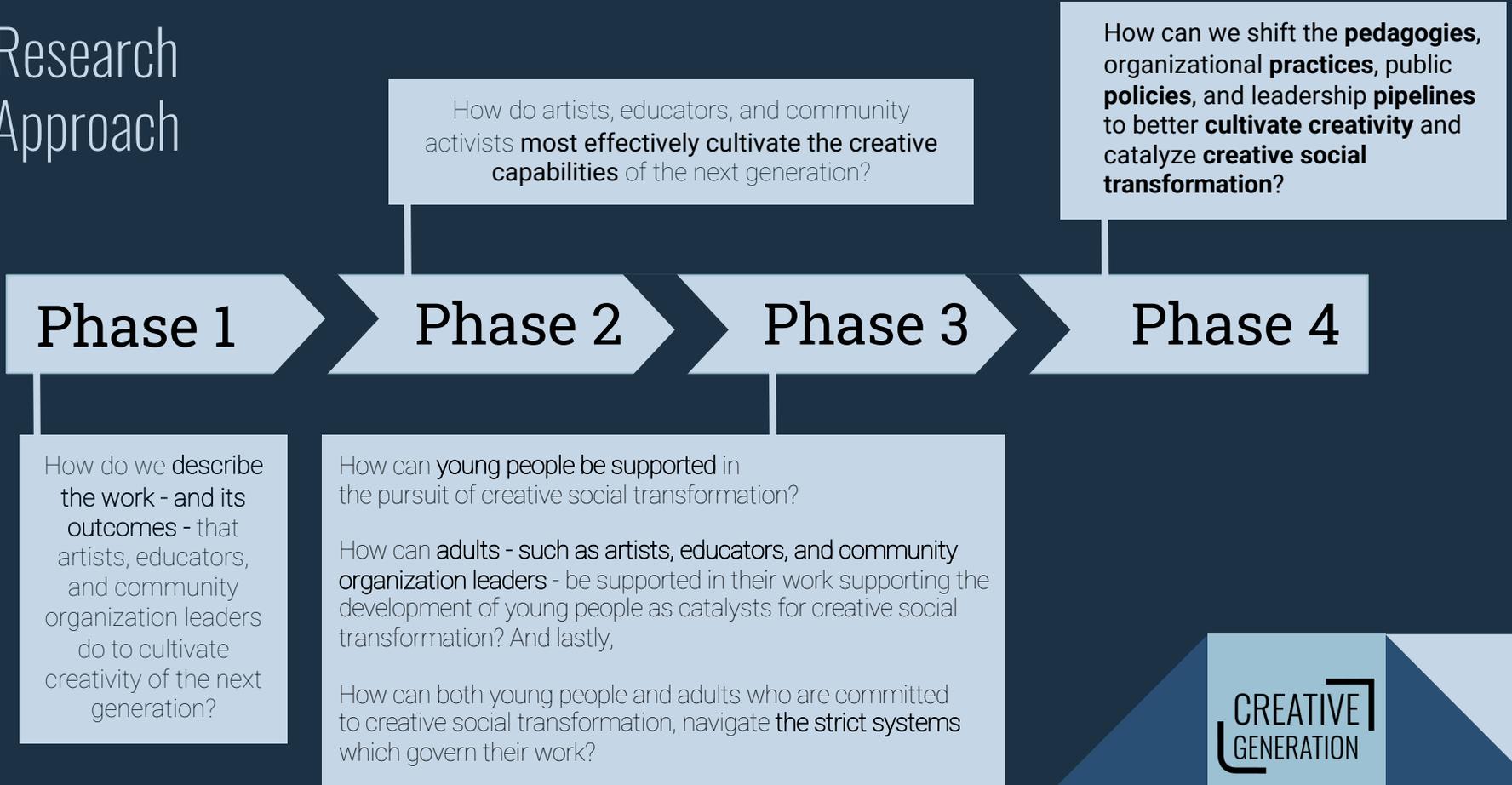
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Creative Generation

Dedicated to the development of thriving communities and a more just world, Creative Generation works to inspire, connect, and amplify the work of young creatives who catalyze social change, and those who are committed to cultivating their creativity.

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Research Approach

How do artists, educators, and community activists **most effectively cultivate the creative capabilities** of the next generation?

How can we shift the **pedagogies**, organizational **practices**, public **policies**, and leadership **pipelines** to better **cultivate creativity** and catalyze **creative social transformation**?

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 | Phase 4 |

How do we **describe the work - and its outcomes -** that artists, educators, and community organization leaders do to cultivate creativity of the next generation?

How can **young people be supported** in the pursuit of creative social transformation?

How can **adults - such as artists, educators, and community organization leaders -** be supported in their work supporting the development of young people as catalysts for creative social transformation? And lastly,

How can both young people and adults who are committed to creative social transformation, navigate **the strict systems** which govern their work?

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An Enriched Vocabulary - Towards A Creative Generation

The Creative Generation – or Gen C for short – is a term taken from consumer marketing, used to describe an intergenerational group of people share common creative capabilities:

- creative thinking,
- cultural consciousness,
- connectivity, and
- concern for community.

They employ their creative capabilities to catalyze social transformation.

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Our Inquiry as an Affiliate of the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project

Skills acquired through an arts education have value for both arts-related and non-arts-related career paths. Yet, a lingering sub-narrative **prescribes success only to those arts graduates who achieve employment in the arts or have an active artistic practice.**

Why is this narrative problematic?

- Perpetuates a narrative of failure rather than an expands our definition of success to include impact of arts-based skills outside of the arts
- Ignores the employment reality that arts graduates face when entering the arts workforce after graduation
- Scrutinizes graduates, rather than educators, the workforce, and policy makers

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Research Questions

- Is working outside of the arts a common experience of all arts graduates?

And if so -

- How different are arts graduates who "left the arts" from arts graduates who "remain in the arts" in terms of their professional aptitudes?

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Methods

*Considering the comparative nature of the research questions, the SNAAP dataset was first divided into two by adding a new variable – **'left the arts.'** This variable was created based on the following criteria:*

1. Arts graduates who are **NOT** currently identify as a professional artist

    AND

1. Arts graduates who are **NOT** currently working in an arts-related occupation

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Methods

The Left the Arts subset comprised 31% of total respondents. The remaining 69%, alumni who Remain in the Arts (left the arts = 0) were confirmed to meet the following criteria:

1. Arts graduates who identify as a professional artist

    OR

1. Arts graduates who are currently working in at least one arts-related occupation

DataBrief 1: Comparing Arts Graduates' Current Employment

To examine the phenomenon of arts graduates working in non-arts-related occupations, we compared the most common occupations reported by SNAAP survey respondents within our two groups - Left the Arts and Remain in the Arts.

We found non-arts-related employment patterns are very similar between respondents who Left the Arts and who Remain in the Arts.

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DataBrief 1: Comparing Arts Graduates' Current Employment

*Comparison of the **five most common non-arts-related occupation** among arts graduates who Left the Arts and who Remain in the Arts*

Left the Arts	Respective share	Remain in the Arts	Respective share
Education, training, and Library	**16%**	**Communications (e.g., journalism, marketing, public relations, advertising, fundraising)**	**14%**
Communications (e.g., journalism, marketing, public relations, advertising, fundraising)	**9%**	**Education, training, and Library**	**13%**
Management (e.g, executives and managers)	**9%**	Other	**10%**
Office and administrative support	**7%**	**Management (e.g, executives and managers)**	**9%**
Sales (e.g, real estate, retail sales)	**7%**	**Office and administrative support**	**8%**

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DataBrief 2: Comparing Arts Graduates' Acquired and Required Skills

To examine whether the narrative of success in question stems from any skill-based gaps we compared the SNAAP respondents' ranks of the skills they acquired during their arts training, as well as the skills required for them to succeed in their current occupations.

We found ranks of acquired skills and required skills were very similar between respondents who Left the Arts and who Remain in the Arts.

We also found a substantial overlap between the skills arts graduates acquired during their training and the skills they required for succeeding in their current employment, whether in the arts or not.

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DataBrief 2: Comparing Arts Graduates' Acquired and Required Skills

*Comparison of **most common skills acquired** during arts training and **skills required** for success in current work among arts graduates who Left the Arts and Remain In the Arts*

Acquired Skill	Left the Arts	In the Arts	Required Skill	Left the Arts	In the Arts
Creative thinking and problem solving	60%	61%	Creative thinking and problem solving	88%	91%
Artistic technique	58%	62%	Interpersonal relations and working collaboratively	82%	82%
Improved work based on feedback from others	55%	58%	Critical thinking and analysis of arguments and information	80%	76%
Critical thinking and analysis of arguments and information	51%	51%	Project management skills	76%	77%
Broad knowledge and education	49%	50%	Broad knowledge and education	71%	73%

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Findings

- *All arts graduates, both those who Left the Arts and those who Remain in the Arts have very similar employment patterns in their non-arts-related occupations.*

- *Graduates in both groups not only work in the same non-arts-related occupations, but they also work in them in similar rates.*

- *The groups do differ in their number of jobs. According to the SNAAP survey, the rate of respondents who Left the Arts with one job (47%) was nearly double the same rate among respondents who Remain in the Arts (24%), while the latter group made two thirds of all respondents.*

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Findings

- *All arts graduates, both those who Left the Arts and those who Remain in the Arts , ranked their acquired and required skills similarly.*

- *Most top acquired skills were also the top required skills for both graduate groups, suggesting that similar skills are needed both within and outside of the arts, and these skills can be acquired through and attributed to an arts education.*

These findings strengthen the argument that defining success by achieving employment in the arts cannot be substantiated by a unique suite of skills one must rely on within this career path, nor by a superior ability to develop certain skills during the training period.

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Recommendations

- *Constructing a New Narrative of Success:*

This means acknowledging the employment reality revealed by this data within our definitions of what successful arts graduates are.

If arts graduates generate positive impact due to skills cultivated during their arts education, why should we condition their successful status on the impact being exclusively within the arts?

Arts graduates who achieve success outside of the arts can act as advocates for the importance of arts education and cross-disciplinary education.

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Recommendations

- *Integrating Arts Education and the Arts Workforce:*

This means preparing arts graduates for the extremely likely future of having to sustain their professional activities within the arts alongside working outside of the arts.

Arts educators can play a key role in ending the dichotomized approach between being in or out of the arts and highlighting the reality of combining and complementing these two states.

This also highlights the importance of multi- and cross-disciplinary education for the arts, as a necessary paradigm for preparing arts students to deliver value after they graduate and enter the workforce.

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Recommendations

- *Examine and Expand How the Creative Economy can Support Livelihoods of Arts Graduates:*

While the creative economy has experienced rapid growth up until the COVID-19 pandemic, this data highlights how it is not yet able to accommodate all the arts graduates who are looking to work solely in the arts and make a living based on their work.

Could this be the reason arts graduates struggle to sustain a professional stake in the arts? Are they forced to make a difficult decision and to prioritize their need for financial stability over their passion for the arts?

How can arts education organizations be active partners in this discussion and advocate for their graduates' futures?

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