The Role and Value of Research Outputs in Coproducing Research With Communities

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Abstract

Coproduced research aims to bring university researchers, community members, and organizations together to create new knowledge, share findings, and develop meaningful research outputs. While there is a growing body of work exploring the processes and methods of coproduction, little attention has been paid to the role and value of the outputs of coproduced research. This article addresses this gap in the literature by considering the value and role of a range of outputs developed via a coproduced community history research project. This article suggests that research outputs fulfill a number of key functions in addition to disseminating findings. Research outputs help collaborators make sense of a project and support the development of research skills and knowledge. Developing outputs also provides space to recognize individual interests and skills, build a collective vision, and help people recognize their own expertise. The article argues that research outputs are fundamental to the process of coproducing research, not simply its end result, and suggests that coproduced research outputs should be viewed as a site of research practice and knowledge production.

Coproduced research involves university researchers, community members, and organizations working together across the research process, drawing on academic, practical, and experiential knowledge to create new understandings and legacies. The coproduction approach aims to stimulate learning, change, and impact across and beyond a research project (Beckett et al., 2018). Coproduction draws on diverse traditions and ideologies and does not sit within any one specific methodology (Facer & Pahl, 2017; Horner, 2016; McDermont et al., 2020). Successful co-creation of research with communities should involve taking a systems perspective, framing research as creative and based on human experience, and emphasizing that research is a process (Greenhalgh et al., 2016).

There is a growing body of work exploring the processes and methods of coproduction. Much of this literature focuses on why to coproduce and explores important issues of inclusivity, empowerment, and democracy. Much less attention has been paid to the legacies of coproduced research. Facer and Enright (2016) propose that the legacies of coproduced research can be broadly categorized as (a) embodied individual legacies, (b) the development of networks and communities, (c) the development and refining of concepts, (d) the promotion of change in the research landscape, (e) the promotion of change to institutions, and (f) the products or tangible outputs of a project. This article focuses on this last category and considers the role and value of the tangible outputs of a coproduced research project. These outputs are many and varied, including traditional research outputs such as conference papers and journal articles; reports, interventions, and events; as well as artistic and creative outputs such as films, performances, and artwork.

Alford (2014) writes that the "co" in coproduction relates to who the coproducers are and what induces them to co-produce, while the "production" part relates to the services, products, or outputs created and the private, public, or group value given to these outputs. Culprin et al. (2021) have suggested there is a danger that "in concentrating attention on how we co-produce, what we co-produce has been ignored" (p. 31). The development of engaging and appropriate coproduced research outputs can help reduce the relevance gap and create relational accountability across partners in the production of outputs (Durose et al., 2012). While it is important to focus attention on the outputs of coproduced research, in this article I suggest that differentiating between "co" and "production" may be a false binary. These two aspects of coproduction are interlinked: One needs to understand what is produced to understand how it is produced and vice versa.

While a traditional research model may be imagined to include carrying out research activity, analyzing data, and writing up and disseminating results, this process is often more cyclical and dynamic in practice. Outputs are certainly a form

of dissemination, but they also support and frame the process of producing and analyzing research. Data in coproduced research tends to be explored iteratively as part of an "unfolding of events that are mulled over collaboratively" (Facer & Pahl, 2017, p. 16). Practicing research collaboratively involves weaving together theory, practice, analysis, and dissemination, recognizing that they can be carried out simultaneously and collaboratively.

It has been noted that research outputs are central to the process of knowledge production (Facer & Enright, 2016). However, accounts of coproduced research outputs are often broad, celebratory descriptions lacking depth and detail. There is a tendency in the literature for articles to either describe the process of developing outputs or to evaluate the reach and impact of coproduced outputs. Both of these approaches miss the reality that in the practice of community-engaged research, processes and outputs become entwined. Exactly how the outputs of coproduced research contribute to the research process is generally given little or no attention. In this article, I aim to address this gap in the literature by providing a detailed and clear analysis of why and how different coproduced research outputs support the integration of diverse forms of knowledge and experience. I reflect on both the successes and challenges encountered across the research process, recognizing the value of writing about and engaging with the "messiness" of community-engaged research (Thomas-Hughes, 2018).

In this article, I also reflect on the work undertaken by a coproduced history project entitled SPAN: a hands-on history, both reviewing what was coproduced and considering the role and value of these project outputs. The following sections outline the background of the project and describe the development of the tangible outputs. Drawing on data from the project, I analyze the role that project outputs played across the research process and suggest that research outputs are fundamental to the process of coproducing research and should be viewed as a site of research practice and knowledge production.

Project Background

The goal of SPAN: a hands-on history was to research and share the history of the Single Parent Action Network (SPAN) by archiving SPAN's historical records, collecting oral histories from its members and service users, and sharing research findings in a range of formats for different audiences. SPAN was a UK-wide independent organization,

active between 1990 and 2016, that was created by a group of women in Bristol who wanted to make life better for single parents. The SPAN: a hands-on history research project was developed as a collaboration among the University of Bristol, Wellspring Settlement (a community organization in Bristol), and the former chief executive of SPAN. The project adopted a collaborative approach to that involved working with community organizations and members of the public as coresearchers across the process of shaping, carrying out, analyzing, and disseminating research.

Positively engaging the public in research outputs is an important feature of participatory historical research (Pente et al, 2015). Participatory historical research is not new; there is a long tradition of community engagement in the field of history (King & Rivett, 2015). However, as Pente et al. (2015) have noted, the practice of historical research has traditionally involved individual scholarship, and "historians consider that they have a special and individual relationship with the primary source materials of their research" (p. 34). Practicing historical research collaboratively alters this relationship and aims to bring diverse voices into narratives of the past (Pente et al, 2015).

In early 2019, 12 women were recruited to work together as a "History Group" that would be facilitated by principal investigator and historian Josie McLellan (JM); myself, a senior research associate and psychologist (JB); and Jude Hutchen (JH), a community development worker. The History Group met one morning a week during the school year for almost a year before moving online for 4 months with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Over the course of the project, the History Group learned about the history of SPAN, received training in research methods, explored SPAN's archive, carried out oral history interviews, and shared their findings.

The project generated many outputs, some of which—journal articles, an evaluation, oral histories, and the archiving of SPAN materials—were predefined in the project funding bid. A core project objective, also outlined in the research funding application, was for the History Group to develop a series of outputs and share them with members of the community who may not usually engage with history. The expectation was that these outputs would be developed collaboratively by the group based on their findings, interests, and expertise. The following sections describe the development of the group's output plan and the outputs they created.

Developing an Output Plan

Working with community researchers on a collaborative research project is often a complex relational activity (Brown et al., 2020) that involves "engaging in messy processes of negotiating power structures and diverse values, confronting our academic positionality and risking letting go of outcomes (and outputs) of research" (Darby, 2017, p. 231). The facilitation team decided that it was essential to develop clear and robust methodologies that would support genuine engagement across the research process, including the development of project outputs, while allowing space for individual expertise and knowledge (Teeters & Jurow, 2019). To achieve this, the facilitation team agreed that it was important to develop decision-making processes that would help the History Group develop and own the practical outputs (Darby, 2017; Flyvbjerg, 2001).

In spring 2019, early in the project, the History Group considered three questions that I had developed and used on previous coproduced research projects in a series of facilitated exercises. The first question—"What do we want to know about SPAN?"—helped the group develop a research question that encompassed their different interests and motivations. The second—"How can we find that out?"—facilitated conversations about sources the group could draw on and the research methods and analysis they could employ. The third question—"Who do we need to tell, and how?"—focused the group's thinking on audiences and outputs. Working through these questions grounded the group's work in a collective, shared research plan and helped the group foreground and value outputs. Over the spring and summer of 2019, the History Group received research training and began exploring the SPAN archive. Midway through the project, in autumn 2019, the group focused on developing an output plan. A budget of £30,000 was available for the development of one or a series of outputs. The facilitation team devised a process for the History Group to work through to collectively decide on an output plan. First, the group considered the aim and value of research outputs; they developed collective criteria for the outputs and applied them to a series of possibilities before developing a plan and agreeing on a budget. This process was not simple. There were moments of agreement and disagreement, but gradually, the History Group came to a "rough consensus" that allowed for collaborative, pragmatic decision-making (McDermont et al., 2020).

The output plan included a film about the research, a piece of public art, an exhibition, and a new follow-on group, probably to work with single parents. COVID necessitated changes to this plan. The film was completed before lockdown and was shared at an online event, and the public artwork was completed during the pandemic and is ready to be installed. The exhibition was replaced with the production of ceramic mugs and an illustrated leaflet. Plans for a new group changed, as many of the History Group felt unable to commit to this.

Producing the Outputs

This section focuses on the development of the tangible project outputs coproduced by the History Group, including those developed as part of their output plan. This section draws on data generated across the SPAN project; an overview is provided in Table 1. I analyzed data purposefully, reviewing how group members discussed and framed outputs. Findings are presented in the following sections, which consider the role of each project output in turn.

Conference

In summer 2019, the History Group was invited to talk about its research at the Modern British Studies Conference. Most group members were excited about and interested in attending an academic conference. Three facilitators and six members of the History Group took a minibus from Bristol to Birmingham to attend. Presenting at the conference involved working together to write a presentation. This took place in small groups, with each group concentrating on speaking about one slide of a collective PowerPoint presentation. Groups worked on and shared ideas with the wider collective, receiving and providing feedback and ideas. This process seemed to support the group in moving toward both a collective definition of what they had achieved so far and a shared vision of the overall research plan and question.

Six people, two facilitators and four members of the History Group, spoke at the conference, and the others in attendance answered questions and added information. Speaking at the conference was a new experience for most group members, who described it as nerve-racking. However, presenting together and having academics ask questions and engage with the project made the research "real." Through this process, community researchers realized that their work had genuine value. Beyond the presentation, the day was fun, and facilitators and coresearchers became a more cohesive

Table 1. Data Informing This Article

Author	Data	Detail
JB (author)	Reflexive diary	The author kept a personal reflexive diary.
Facilitators	Debriefing notes	After each History Group session, the facilitators recorded pro forma notes regarding how the session had worked in practice and noted next steps and actions arising.
	Recorded reflexive conversations	The facilitators met four times over the course of the project to take part in recorded conversations reflecting on the work of the project at different stages.
History Group	Feedback	Each week, the History Group was asked to provide feedback in the form of post-it notes on a piece of paper answering the questions: "What went well?"; "What didn't go well?"; and "Even better if …" Photos of these were stored digitally.
	Group activities	The History Group took part in a range of different activities throughout the process. Where possible and appropriate, these activities were photographed, and images were stored digitally.
	Group reflection	The History Group took part in a recorded conversation after the online event.
Event attendees	Survey	Everyone who attended the public online event was sent a survey; 35 people responded.
Evaluation team	Evaluation report	The project was evaluated by LH and TC. LH was a critical friend to the project and interviewed project partners, including the History Group. She also observed sessions and was part of the management group.

group. In evaluation interviews, the History Group researchers talked about the importance of working together. Delivering the presentation was described as a way of building confidence and pride. As one History Group member described,

> We were all nervous … that day, we were all like "How is it going to be?" … It was like my first time to go out, do some like talking in front of people. So … I was so nervous. But we did it, and did it as well, and … I was so proud that I did it. … We had fun; it was a really nice day. You're not going to forget about that. (Henry & Cole, 2021, p. 73)

Another said:

> That was … a really nice experience … we were all a bit scared because it was a bit out of our comfort zone. And kind of going and presenting this project that … we were sort of just at the beginning with really … to academics was kind of quite daunting … it was really nice to go as a group and work on it together … we … got a really nice response from people and … it was good for us all … stand up and … and say our … our bit … and … us all … feel … proud of the project and what we were doing. (Henry & Cole, 2021, p. 77)

Oral Histories

Oral history interviews offered group members a way to understand, capture, and share the history of SPAN. Preparation involved discussions of the theory and ethics of oral history and practical sessions in which the History Group constructed an interview schedule, reviewed and refined a participant information sheet, and developed a plan for conducting interviews. A final session focused on practicing interviews and working through the group's pragmatic and ethical concerns. History Group members valued co-constructing the interview schedule and information sheet, reporting that "it felt like our opinions really mattered" (feedback). This activity provided group members with ownership of the material and ensured that questions were phrased in ways that felt natural and comfortable. The facilitators noted in a debriefing meeting that "people were very engaged talking about the interview schedule and the details of specific questions—useful and insightful feedback and great comments" (debriefing notes).

Group members reported some anxiety about interviewing. The group discussed how this could be supported, and the facilitators shared their own experiences. After practicing, people noted that it was still "a bit scary" but that it was "good to practice … got easier" (feedback) and that during this activity they gained confidence. After the final preparation session, one commented, "let's get started!" (feedback). Later, after a first interview, one History Group member noted, "It went well and I think it was good to have, you know, and I had a lot of questions prepared and things. So, it was good to have done all the preparation" (Henry & Cole, 2021, p. 80).

The SPAN project held an event to introduce the research to people who had worked for and/or used SPAN's services. While this event was planned partly with recruitment in mind, on reflection, it was particularly valuable in demystifying interviewees. People met over coffee and lunch, chatted, and arranged interviews. One member of the History Group commented:

> I attended the event at the community centre and that went really well. … The event was really good and I think, yeah, it was really nice for us … for the group to meet members of SPAN as well as the other way around." (Henry & Cole, 2021, p. 74)

In total, 27 interviews were conducted; the facilitators and members of the History Group took part in at least one interview each. History Group members carried out interviews independently or in pairs in interviewees' homes and in community centers. Some preferred to conduct interviews alongside a member of the facilitation team. This generally involved the facilitator starting an interview and then the History Group researcher taking over the role. In one such instance, a group member described,

> The first one I did, I was actually just going to sit in and observe. … But I felt comfortable enough to actually ask questions … it went really well … I then felt confident to actually just do one … do one on my own. … Like, it was good to just like actually just do something on my own, like, independent of the rest of the group. … And it was … it was good, because I felt relaxed. … And well prepped and comfortable to do it. (Henry & Cole, 2021, p. 78)

After these interviews, group members shared accounts with the rest of the group and gradually built a collective knowledge base. Information was shared in an experiential manner. People would talk about what it felt like to do the interview, what they had learned, and what questions arose. Interviews provided a space to practice what some of the group referred to as "real research." A research interview is a clear, recognized piece of academic research. The oral histories were archived as a resource for future researchers, and interviewees were real people who had been part of SPAN's story. There was a strong sense of responsibility about this. One group member reflected that carrying out interviews put a lot of trust in them because other people would read the transcripts and judge their work. The group saw the oral histories as an important research output with a clear future audience.

There was also a general sense of responsibility in capturing the work that SPAN did. It was important to the group that the oral histories told the story of SPAN, and carrying out an interview was a clear contribution to collecting the organization's history. The interviews provided History Group members with increased confidence in their knowledge of SPAN and practical information to draw upon. As one described,

I wasn't sure about it … was how it's going to be … I hadn't interviewed anyone … and it went well … it was a good experience that phase, I mean, you got to hear from them about their experiences and how they formed SPAN … it was kind of a first-time experience … I think I did a few interviews. … Had a … had a different experience from each. (Henry & Cole, 2021, p. 80–81)

Another noted,

I think it … speaking to real people gave you more of an insight of what it was like at SPAN, than it did just reading about it. … Because you can never really feel emotion when you just read, can you? (Henry & Cole, 2021, p. 79)

Artwork

Once the History Group had developed its output plan, facilitators drafted and shared a brief for the artist commission with the group. The group discussed and refined both this document and the selection process for the artist, and the brief was advertised widely. The members of the History Group agreed that they wanted an artist who could make a powerful, accessible, and memorable artwork. They wanted the piece to relate clearly to their research and to engage with the history of SPAN. It was important that the artwork be developed through participatory processes and encompass diversity. Due to large numbers of artist applications and limited group time, facilitators long-listed six candidates and shared scores and a description of the long-listing process with the History Group. The History Group then read, discussed, and scored the six applications and voted on three artists to invite for an interview.

There were frustrations about this process. Some of the group members would have preferred to see all applications, while others were less interested in this. Facilitators attempted to arrange a time to meet outside of the group with those interested in long-listing but were unable to be flexible in meeting times and could not guarantee childcare, which led to further frustration. A few members of the History Group asked to review the candidates who didn't make it into the long list and reported that it was useful to see, and challenge, our process.

Once we made a decision on which artists to invite for interview, the group noted that they "reached a consensus quite easily in the end" (feedback), and facilitators noted that "people were engaged and excited about the activity. We had been a bit worried about the decision-making being a bit contentious but actually it all felt good and open and clear" (debriefing notes).

The History Group and facilitators devised a selection process and interview questions, and artist interviews took place during a group session. Time was a challenge, but the group reported that they felt excited and relieved that there was a clear decision and agreement. The ceramic artist and craftivist Carrie Reichardt was appointed to carry out the artwork, and Reichardt worked with the History Group to develop plans over three sessions.

In the first session, Reichardt led a discussion with the group about the main themes the group wanted the artwork to address. In the debriefing notes, this meeting was described as a "really positive session with people talking confidently about the research they have done and drawing on their own personal experience." In the second session, Reichardt talked through her ideas, particularly focusing on potential sites, text, and color palettes. The group spent some time looking at the SPAN archive and oral history transcripts and thinking about parts they could pull out for Reichardt. The facilitators later reflected on the level of knowledge of SPAN that the History Group had demonstrated in this task and noted that the practical nature of sharing information for a purpose was supportive of a pragmatic, detailed analysis. In the third session, Reichardt shared some rough designs, discussed wording, and reported on the progress of the design. Some of the History Group members noted that meeting with Reichardt over several weeks had been key to feeling like a part of the design process. It was important that History Group members had the chance to hear ideas, think about them, and respond over time.

Plans for meetings and installation changed due to the impact of COVID. Reichardt continued working on the piece through lockdown, and the work is ready to install. The History Group is looking forward to seeing the work. As one researcher explained, "Even though we haven't seen it yet, I think that artwork is going to look amazing and it's going to be there forever. … And it's one of the things I voted for" (Henry & Cole, 2021, p. 75).

Making a Film

The project facilitators asked a film company (Calling the Shots [CTS], whom two of the facilitators had previously worked with on coproduced projects) to develop a proposal based on a brief written by the History Group. CTS presented its proposal to the group, who facilitated a discussion around the aim of the film, whom it would target, and what format might be best. CTS and the facilitators screened examples of four films with different structures, and they asked group members what level of involvement they might want in a film project. Over the following weeks, CTS provided a plan that the group, in turn, offered feedback on. CTS then returned for a detailed planning session, which gave the group a clearer idea of what could and could not be achieved within the budget and time available. The facilitators noted that there was some disappointment about the short length of the film, but overall, the History Group seemed positive and excited. Two group members were keen to engage with editing, and it was noted that this may need support in terms of childcare and travel.

Production of the film involved first organizing, chairing, and filming a focus group composed of SPAN members and then filming the History Group watching and responding to the focus group footage. The History Group wrote questions for the focus group, and two History Group members attended filming and chaired the event. CTS then came to a group session and interviewed all members present. History Group members described participating in the filming as both a nerve-racking and proud moment. One noted,

> The interview for the film was another experience … the girls were pushing me … "why don't you do it?" You're not ready to do something and [then you do it and] you feel comfortable. … For me to be in a film … [that was] one of biggest things for me. (Henry & Cole, 2021, p. 77)

Some members of the History Group were pleasantly surprised that they had been involved in producing a film: "I didn't think we would end up making a film and I am so proud of everyone, the hard work they did, we end up doing something" (Henry & Cole, 2021, p. 76).

Several people noted that the team at CTS was warm and welcoming and seemed to listen to and understand what the group wanted. History Group members were glad that they were able to get involved, write questions, think about the format, and review rough cuts. However, a few people felt let down that there was not more opportunity to engage in the technical side of filmmaking. Group members had discussed a desire to learn more about filmmaking and to engage in the technical side of film production, but this proved challenging. Childcare was difficult to arrange, and CTS needed to work around studio availability. Without greater flexibility and childcare, it was challenging for some group members to engage. On reflection, there was a clear difference between group members' expectations for the scope of the film and the available resources.

Public Event

The group's initial plan was to hold an event in April 2020 to launch the film, hold an exhibition of the SPAN archive, and talk about the project. Due to pandemic restrictions, the event was moved online and held in July 2020. Planning an online event took a lot of time and thought. The History Group worked together to write and record a presentation explaining the background of the project. Group members recorded and shared sections of the presentation via WhatsApp audio clips, and they curated a PowerPoint to be shared alongside the film, after which JM chaired a question and answer session.

Over 60 people attended the event, including friends, supporters, academics interested in coproduction and public history, SPAN employees and service users, and people working across the community and voluntary sector. Attendees received a feedback form after the event, and in general, they rated the event highly. The film was the highlight of the event: One attendee wrote, "I really loved the film—it was wonderful not only hearing the oral histories but also being able to see your historical researchers reacting to the testimonies" (survey). Almost all attendees said they had learned something new, mainly relating to the history of SPAN. A few said that they'd learned more about the project and felt inspired about public history and engaged/online events. One said, "It was such an inspiring event. It really showed what is possible when academics collaborate with community organisations to genuinely and meaningfully co-create knowledge" (survey).

The following week, the History Group reflected on their experience of the event in a recorded conversation. Generally, everyone was positive and pleased that lots of people attended. The History Group members noted that it had

worked well overall and that there were no technical glitches; they felt well prepared. For some, the event was better than expected. A few said that they had been unsure how Zoom would work and that it was a nice surprise. Having lots of different voices on the narrated presentation was important. The group also noted that they had been much more nervous than expected and, in the moment, did not want to answer questions or be on video. We wondered if we could have practiced more for the question and answer session, but people were not sure this would have helped; it was just a bit nerve-racking.

Sharing the film via an online event provided important "live" feedback on the research. Like attending the conference, seeing the online audience genuinely engage with and respond positively to the project was important to the History Group. The positive reactions validated our work and demonstrated that it had real-world value.

Exhibition, Leaflet, and Ceramics

Initially, the History Group had planned an exhibition of the SPAN archive and artistic responses to the archive to share alongside the film screening. One of the group members made a proposal to design a range of mugs using images from the SPAN archive. JH and one of the group members worked together to design images; they brought these images to the group, which then chose the final designs. This project drew on the participating group member's design skills, and, at a time when she had started a new job and could no longer attend weekly group sessions, this activity kept her engaged in the project as part of the collective. The mugs were seen as a gift, or commemorative item, a "nice take home thing … everybody that interviewed us and ex-SPAN members as well as members of the group and sort of maybe some other people, would get a copy of these mugs" (Henry & Cole, 2021, p. 75).

In early 2020, as it became clear that holding a physical exhibition was not a possibility, the mugs became a focus. The group also decided to reallocate funds from an exhibition to an illustrated leaflet. This leaflet arose from earlier discussions regarding how to include research on the current context of single parenting within a history project. One group member felt that this was particularly important. Rather than include this topic as part of the research activity of the whole group, it became something that one person individually researched and wrote about. This information, alongside project background and contacts, was incorporated into a leaflet that was illustrated by a local designer and made available as a PDF and foldout poster.

The mug and leaflet highlight the importance of supporting individual work within a collective and not shutting down ideas. There is a value in holding an idea, suggesting that it does not quite fit but has value, and actively finding a way to give it space.

The Role and Value of Outputs

Henry and Cole (2021) write in their project evaluation that "the process of creating the outputs of the History Group was a crucial aspect of researchers' engagement throughout the project. The presentation at the conference, an early SPANers event, the design of the mugs, and the film, all provide solid evidence of the group's progress and ability" (p. 75).

The outputs fulfilled several key functions across the project. They helped the History Group make sense of the project and their role within it. Working toward outputs supported the practical development of research skills and the building of knowledge. Developing an output plan highlighted individual interests and built a collective vision. Across the entire project, working on and sharing outputs allowed the History Group to recognize their own expertise and to share their findings with a range of audiences. These points are elaborated upon below.

Making Sense of a Project

Outputs provided a road map and a sense of clarity and purpose. Starting to work on a coproduced research project is often confusing and messy. Coproduction involves holding an open space while people come together to decide how to work together and what to do. Outputs can play a critical role in helping collaborators engage with and make sense of a project. On the SPAN project, working toward the early conference presentation scaffolded thinking and provided a clear reason to develop a research question and plan. Developing an output plan with a clear budget pushed group members to consider and negotiate their priorities and to determine what to share, whom to share it with, and how. Later, the public event gave group members an opportunity to reflect on and consider their own learning and the value of the research project.

Developing Research Skills and Knowledge

In developing the research outputs, group members asked questions, found information, and critically evaluated what they knew. Developing interview schedules and collecting oral

histories involved purposefully, practically, and experientially learning about research skills and ethics. Undertaking interviews was a supportive practice in which the History Group learned about SPAN firsthand. In commissioning the film and artwork, the group engaged with the archive, analyzed oral histories, and reviewed relevant literature to provide information about SPAN to an artist and filmmaker.

Building a Collective Vision

Developing research outputs compelled group members to express their individual motivations and interests and helped the group build consensus. Writing presentations for the conference and public event involved coming together to present a collective vision of individual experiences and ideas. Working on the oral history interview schedule involved considering group members' diverse interests and questions alongside the project's aims to develop a shared document that everyone involved felt happy with. Later, writing the group's output plans together helped group members consider their collective vision. Developing several outputs allowed for different ideas to emerge within the collective and involved compromise, discussion, and consensus building. The outputs provided a meaningful and motivating focus that the group could work toward together.

Supporting Individual Interests

Even as the outputs helped the group develop a collective focus, they also provided an opportunity for group members to develop and employ their individual skills and interests. The plan to develop a range of outputs meant that individuals could engage more or less with different outputs and allowed the group to support different, sometimes divergent, interests and ideas. The group's decision-making process allowed everyone involved to express their opinions and preferences before developing a collective plan. Having a range of outputs seemed to help people not only recognize their own contributions to the research process but also recognize others' interests and the collective value of the project.

Seeing One's Own Expertise

Sharing research plans at an academic conference positioned the group as "real" researchers and gave group members confidence in their plans and abilities. Later, working with a professional artist and film company, the History Group was positioned as the expert on SPAN, and

group members had to draw on their knowledge in a process of practical analysis. Writing the leaflet relied on one member's journalistic skills, while the mug design rested on the artistic design skills of another individual. Developing and sharing outputs clearly demonstrated individual and collective knowledge and expertise.

Dissemination

The project outputs were all methods of collecting and sharing SPAN's history with different audiences. The conference spoke directly to academics, for instance, and the oral histories are now an important part of the SPAN archive. Presenting the film at an event brought a range of people together, highlighted the value of SPAN, and showcased how the group had worked on the project. Once installed, the artwork will share the history of SPAN with the local community in which it was formed. The illustrated leaflet situates the research within the current context of single parenting and clearly explains the purpose of the project. The commemorative mugs are an artistic response to the archive and are valued by the project team, those who were involved with SPAN, and interviewees. Developing a range of outputs has enabled the project team to find innovative and interesting ways of sharing the history of SPAN.

In writing this paper and reviewing the role and value of research outputs, I have learned a number of lessons that I will take forward into my future research practice. First, it is essential to ensure coresearchers' genuine engagement in and ownership of the decision-making process. It is important to provide clarity early on about which decisions are open to negotiation, how much money is available, and when decisions need to be made. Decision-making processes must be clear, varied, and agreed upon in advance. Everyone engaged in the process needs to be confident both in how they engage and in the fairness of the process.

Second, to support fair engagement, it is necessary to take time to understand and address accessibility needs. Facilitators must understand what people engaged in the project need to actively participate in both decision-making processes and the development of outputs.

Finally, I have learned that there is value in developing objective criteria and agreeing on principles before making decisions. On the SPAN project, developing agreed-upon criteria for our outputs, the artist commission, and the film in advance permitted open group discussions and

allowed all involved to discuss ideas in an abstract manner. Disagreements could be mediated by reviewing the agreed-upon group criteria.

By recognizing the role of outputs and attending to these points, the value of research outputs can be enhanced for all involved in coproducing research.

Conclusion

In this article, I have reflected on the role and value of the research outputs of SPAN: a hands-on history. The aim of sharing these reflections is to draw attention to the role of outputs across the process of coproducing research in supporting the development and sharing of new knowledge. Creating the SPAN research outputs allowed diverse voices to come together in dialogue to generate, analyze, and disseminate new knowledge. The outputs of the SPAN project acted as mediating praxes in which the History Group developed common understandings and made sense of the material and knowledge they were working with.

The research project discussed in this article adopted a pragmatic approach to inquiry and the production of outputs that involved accepting that research, rather than being a special way of knowing and understanding the world, can be conceptualized as general common-sense inquiry (Horner, 2016). Through a pragmatic lens, practical knowledge, academic expertise, and everyday knowledge come together in dialogue to produce meaningful, relatable outputs.

The findings presented here clearly demonstrate that research outputs in coproduced research are much more fundamental than they have previously been given credit for. Research outputs reframe knowledge and the process of producing knowledge. The process of developing and creating outputs is iterative and is inquiry in and of itself; as Law (2004) suggests that research does not access a pre-existing reality but is active in the creation of reality.

Coproducing research outputs brings people together and helps create a shared collaborative space that mediates the processes of knowledge production, analysis, and dissemination. Coproduced research outputs support the merging of academic, experiential, and practical knowledges. Developing and valuing project outputs that are meaningful for all involved supports the development of equitable research practice and recognizes that outputs are central to the research process, not simply its end result.

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About the Author

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