Dangerous Liaisons or Critical Alliances: Student perceptions of Community Engagement at Rhodes University, South Africa

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Abstract:

Community Engagement (CE) in South Africa is an increasingly important feature of the relationship between the university and a broader community, and may aid in bridging the entrenched social divisions of this nation. This will only be possible if CE succeeds in uniting the knowledge production interests of the university and the broader community. Through CE, knowledge production and dissemination from within the university should be made more relevant and applicable because it is based on a relationship or engagement with a community. Based on the perceptions of student volunteers in a CE programme at a South African university, this thesis set out to ask whether or not students are transformed through university-community collaboration. This research examines the perceptions and motivations of student volunteers entering community partnership programmes. More importantly, it asks whether these engagements are merely a "weekend special" consisting of shallow engagements, which last only a few hours a week that provide institutional window dressing; or well-intended engagements through which students build meaningful relationships and experience learning opportunities that prepare them for real world civic participation. As this thesis focuses on the student perspective, it explores whether or not CE has an impact, both personally and educationally or academically, on the lives of individual student volunteers. The literature on CE argues that students' participation in CE opportunities should enhance academic learning, personal growth and promote a sense of citizenship or civic responsibility. Based on the perceptions of a small group of student volunteers at one university, this thesis identifies possible successes and limitations of CE volunteering programmes in order to see if what is promoted in the literature or institutional policies is being experienced or achieved in practice at universities. I argue that students are indeed transformed through processes of CE, often in unexpected ways, and despite many difficulties. Therefore, if CE provides students with more holistic learning opportunities while attending universities for academic ends, it is important to look at in what ways this is achieved.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

> If the university does not take seriously and rigorously its role as guardian of wider civic freedoms, as interrogator of more and more complex ethical problems, as servant and preserver of deeper democratic practices, then some other regime or ménage of regimes will do it for us, in spite of us, and without us. The political role of universities should not be weakened by CE and community partnerships where universities might be co-opted in serving the interests of the powerful instead of the weak.
>
> Toni Morrison, *How can values be taught in the university?*

> In time, we shall be in a position to bestow on South Africa the greatest possible gift - a more human face.
>
> Steve Biko, *I write what I like*

Community Engagement (CE) is one way in which Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have committed to redress, redistribution and development in the South African context (DoE: 1997; CHE, 2004; HEQC, 2004). Historically, and at present, there are often events or circumstances that evoke a greater need or urgency for transformation. The fall of the apartheid regime in 1994 was one such moment. In reflecting on the post-1994 South African context, there is an ongoing need for transformation in order to confront dysfunctional systems. These inherited systems continue to shape and impede society, and changes in all sectors of South African society will be necessary if we are to bring about their undoing.

Historically, education has been used to both liberate and oppress. One way in which to develop HE that meets socio-economic needs at a national level and quality knowledge production at an international standard has emerged through the concept Community Engagement (CE) (DoE: 1997). Another CE objective is that HEIs educate citizens of a nation for the good of that nation, and connect HEIs to the communities in which they are situated. CE recognises the need to expand and promote knowledge production and dissemination that achieves economic productivity and promotes expertise, but just as importantly, carries social significance in that it aims to teach students a better way of living

with others. If this is so, CE may serve to inspire a greater sense of humanity within the social environments people occupy through productive practices.

In 1997, CE was established as a third pillar of HE in South Africa alongside teaching-learning and research. The White Paper outlining a new policy position on HE was produced under the leadership of the new post-1994 democratic government of South Africa. Subsequent HE policies make little reference to the importance of CE as a third pillar of South African HE; however, as CE has been established and implemented in individual South African universities following the 1997 White Paper, many universities have elaborated further on the role of CE in response to this policy. Furthermore, conferences on CE have taken place, publications on CE have proliferated and quality control and benchmarking mechanisms have been put in place in relation to CE government institutions' endorsement and facilitation. Thus, CE has been established in universities across South Africa and it is up to those individual institutions to interpret and include CE in their individual policy positions on HE social responsibility and service.

CE is practiced in a variety of forms, such as service-learning, collaborative research and volunteering. In addition to different forms of practices, there have been distinct shifts, particularly in South Africa, in how CE is articulated. This is evident in the shift from a focus on charity or outreach and service to a focus on university-community reciprocity, and from thinking of it as involving the transferral of knowledge to thinking about it in terms of a knowledge exchange (Olowu, 2011). These shifts reflect a desire to move from an approach which positions the university as powerful benefactor to one that encourages a more egalitarian relationship between the university and community. However, by virtue of forming part of the university, particular kinds of power and privilege seem inescapable in CE projects. While the university community is made up of different individuals with different backgrounds, this privilege remains a part of their university identity. For instance, economically, HEIs are prioritised by receiving funds from the public purse; and socially, an individual's status is elevated through HE. Thus, in relationships between staff and students from the university, and community stakeholders or broader society, privilege is ever present and needs to be both acknowledged and considered in each and every exchange or interaction. It is precisely these interactions that reveal how important it is to interrogate the politics of the relationship between the university and the community. The same event or interaction may be seen as a critical alliance or a dangerous liaison, and thus, the question of intent in CE relations requires discussion, negotiation and reflection

Exploring the conceptualisation and objectives of CE, both locally and nationally, is necessary in order to better understand where it is that policy and practice converge and deviate, as well as possible reasons for why it is that university-community divisions are perpetuated in so many instances. The university has been given a responsibility in South Africa's transition from apartheid to a democratic state, and this responsibility provides the university with a certain amount of power. This is evident in the form of capital from the public purse, and the invitation to participate in building the nation through social responsibility that is protected by academic freedom. Balancing power and responsibility in the HE context is important to the integrity of the work of the university in order to respond to "ethical problems" so that these institutions are not "co-opted in serving the interests of the powerful instead of the weak" (Morrison, 2000:278).

Research Objectives

In order to better understand the CE concept in the South African context, this research explores one aspect of CE by looking at student volunteering. More specifically, the data presented is from the perspective of students participating in Rhodes University's Student Volunteering Programme (SVP). This thesis addresses the question: Are students transformed through participation in the SVP? Advocates of CE contend that CE provides HEIs with the platform to involve students in engagement opportunities beyond the lecture theatre and within broader communities in a way that enhances academic learning and personal growth, and should promote a sense of citizenship or civic responsibility. This research project aims to determine whether or not student participants in the SVP at Rhodes University really were changed in the way envisaged by advocates of CE. In addition, this research project contributes to discussion of the bigger question of whether CE in South Africa has the potential to contribute significantly toward the transformation goals as set out in the post-1994 policy on HE, the 1997 White Paper. Exploring the benefits and limitations of the SVP is one part of this broader national project, and the central focus in this thesis.

Method

In order to determine whether CE really does result in profound changes in perception among students, a small group of students participating in the SVP were interviewed at length about their experience of CE at a South African institution, Rhodes University. Before conducting interviews with student volunteers, a survey questionnaire was distributed to new volunteers to get a broader sense of student understanding of CE at Rhodes University. The

methodology used will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 3, but it is worth commenting briefly on it at the outset. The survey questionnaire was given to students entering the volunteering programme at the beginning of a training workshop at the beginning of the academic year, this training being a prerequisite to joining any student volunteering programme at Rhodes University. Following the survey questionnaire, the training workshops provided by Rhodes University and the commencement of the student volunteering programmes, students were invited to participate in this research project to share and reflect on their personal experiences and perceptions. For the purposes of this thesis, six students participated in a process of semi-structured interviews. The interviews reveal student perceptions and experiences of the SVP in practice. Through their contributions, this research explores whether students are indeed transformed as a result of CE participation as claimed within the literature on CE in South Africa and elsewhere.

Structure

Following this brief introductory chapter, the structure of thesis is as follows. Chapter 2 introduces CE, beginning by acknowledging that CE is practiced and theorised beyond the South African context, and more importantly, that CE in South Africa has been influenced, and even shaped by contributors and ideas outside of its borders. For this reason, Chapter 2 begins by looking at some of the international contributions that have conceptualised this term CE. The literature on CE in Chapter 2 then moves from a focus on international contributions to the context of South Africa, and the ways in which CE has been contextualised and implemented within this context.

As this research was a qualitative study that took place at one small university in South Africa, Rhodes University, Chapter 3 focuses on contextualising Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) within Grahamstown. Furthermore, Chapter 3 outlines the different forms of CE at Rhodes. As this study focuses on one particular form of CE, or programme practiced, the Student Volunteering Programme (SVP), this chapter makes note of how this programme or function of CE differs to other forms practiced at Rhodes University, and the position different forms of CE assume within the RUCE context. This chapter includes a brief discussion of the methodology used to analyse the data, and introduces the student volunteers who participated in this study. As argued in the literature and policies on CE at Rhodes, at the broader national level, and elsewhere beyond the borders

of South Africa, one of the aims of CE is to aid in transforming students into better citizens. This aim is central to the analysis of data collected from student participants.

Chapter 4 summarises and engages with the interview data in order to explore whether or not students are transformed by participating in a process of CE, or in the case of this study, the SVP specifically. The RUCE mandate is used to map responses in order to answer the central research question to this study, whether or not the SVP contributes to developing a sense of citizenship as advocated by the literature in Chapter 2.

In the final chapter, the discussion of the SVP in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 is related to the broader understanding of the purpose of CE discussed in Chapter 2. Concluding remarks are made about students' experience with respect to transformations or changes through their participation in the SVP.

Chapter 2

Interpretations of the Community Engagement concept in Higher Education

Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Community Engagement (CE) is practiced through various forms or programmes in the Higher Education (HE) sector such as volunteering, service-learning or collaborative community-based research. This study focuses on the Student Volunteering Programme (SVP) at Rhodes University. It sets out to explore whether student participation in this CE programme has an effect on student perceptions of their position within the university in relation to their membership within broader communities, or what might be referred to as a sense of citizenship. Furthermore, this project asks whether CE can successfully support the quest of universities to inculcate a sense of citizenship while maintaining the other core missions of scholarship such as research, teaching and learning in the university. Thus, this project questions whether scholarship becomes more relevant and useful as a result of the incorporation of CE. While CE might have various effects on different members of the university, as well as on community stakeholders outside of the university, the focus of this study is on students. In order to explore these questions, CE will be contextualised as a term in this chapter by focussing on existing literature and interpretations of CE within HE.

This chapter will begin by exploring what CE is understood to be and do within the HE sector of society. As CE is a concept that has been utilised within global Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) prior to obtaining its post-1994 policy position in South Africa, key thinkers from the international HE community will be drawn on to explore how CE has been conceptualised. The literature presented in this section focuses particularly on three core contributors to HE CE, namely Ernest Boyer, an early architect of CE; the Kellogg Commission, which played a key role in promoting CE; and Michael Gibbons whose ideas relating to Mode 2 knowledge influenced the development of CE. The CE project was prioritised in the US in the 1990s due to the public perception that the University was failing to fulfil its role as a public institution. As a result Boyer, the President of the Carnegie Foundation at the time, and the Kellogg Commission, invested their institutional resources toward conducting research and providing reports on this HE area of interest. The third contribution, by Michael Gibbons et al., was chosen not only because it expanded on the work of the CE concept internationally, but also, because the post-1994 South African HE

policy framework was strongly influenced by it. In discussing these global HE community contributions, this chapter will focus particularly on the arguments made in relation to the desirable effects CE should have on students. As this study takes place at a South African university, this chapter also includes a section focused on how CE has been conceptualised and incorporated in the post-1994 South African political landscape. The work of Ronald Barnett is included, connecting the international contributions in the first part of the chapter, to those in the second part of the chapter that focuses on South Africa's contribution to conceptualising CE. Barnett's contributions will also be used to frame the recent South African HE CE debates in the final section of this chapter.

What is Community Engagement?

> [T]hese definitions are sometimes framed in a way that gives the impression that an end-goal has been established and that the definitional task is to arrive at the pre-set goal. This runs the risk of "defining out" of the debate some inherited precepts and practices.
>
> Loyiso Nongxa, *An (engaged) response to Hall's paper: Community Engagement in South African Higher Education, 2010*

What is this *thing* we call Community Engagement (CE)? Defining this concept within HE has been both complex and contentious in South Africa, as well as within the global HE community.One of the most widely adopted explanations of community engagement, which emerged from *The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*, describes community engagement as the "collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in the context of partnership and reciprocity" (Campus Compact, 1999-2014 *cited in* Kajner and Shultz, 2013:2). However, in practice, CE assumes a variety of forms such as outreach programmes, participation with community stakeholders through curricular and co-curricular activities, and research in collaboration with community stakeholders. Therefore, how CE is articulated may depend on the particular form it takes, such as co-curricular student volunteering or curricular service-learning. These activities may be recognised as CE if they relate to the aims defined by the Carnegie Foundation above or, more generally, if they promote collaboration between the university and a broader community.

In response to a growing perception that universities are increasingly disengaged from the real world, CE promotes the steering of the intellectual roles and functions of the university toward public good and democratic practice. If the university prioritises economic ends, often

referred to as the "market university", what results is an exclusionary space (Badat, 2009; Boyer, 1990; Campus Compact, 1999; Delanty, 2000; Gibbons et al., 1998; Kraak, 2004; Neave, 2000; Readings, 1996; Olsen and Peters, 2007).For this reason, it may be assumed that CE is both a response to the perceived "disengaged" university, and an attempt to redefine the roles and functions of the university in contemporary society.

In recognising the need to create more engaged institutions, Badat explains that the university ought not only to be aimed at intellectual and economic ends, but should also be seen as tied to the cultural development of citizens in ways that deepen "economic, political, social and cultural opportunities and rights" (2013:3). According to him, this should lead to "rich, productive and rewarding lives" inside and outside of the university (Badat, 2013:3). Badat's statement does not merely suggest that the work of the university might deepen opportunities and rights that may lead to favourable outcomes, but the opportunities he speaks of suggest an acknowledgement that the university is a site of privilege.

Conceptualising CE and its purpose is central to how universities might transform into more engaged institutions. This chapter will explore the position of the university in society, and how, through CE, the university might better contribute to, or benefit from the broader community. The next section asks how such a partnership might contribute to achieving the perceived goals or missions of the university.

Contributions to conceptualising CE from a global perspective

This section will explore three key contributions to the conceptualisation of CE in HE within an international community. These have been particularly influential and have helped pioneer the conceptualisation and spread of the CE concept within Higher Education in the US and elsewhere, including South Africa.

In a general sense, these contributions were all a response to the state of the modern university and to a sense that there was increasing public dissatisfaction toward HEIs. This included concerns around high illiteracy rates, high student fees, and the role of the university in adequately educating students for the work place, while also adequately educating students to become responsible citizens within their communities. These concerns have been central to the question of the role of the university. In recent years, the idea of "engagement" has been at the centre of this debate, which explores how the university community might improve the integrity of academic work and public good by including external communities in the

university's activities. It is about where traditional functions of the university such as teaching, research and service may be redirected and extended so that the university functions productively, considerately, and consciously, involving the communities in which they are situated, serve, and are supported. While there are many contributors to this debate, Boyer, Gibbons and his associates, as well the Kellogg Commission have produced reports, literature and have created conceptual frameworks that have been highly influential on these "engagement" debates and how CE might be understood as a concept.

Boyer's epistemological foundations to understanding CE

The work of Earnest Boyer is important to the literature and current debates on CE as it was he who first introduced the term "scholarship of engagement", which was the title of an article he wrote in 1996. This concept has been popularised in contemporary work on HEIs, and emerges in a variety of forms, such as community-engagement scholarship, public scholarship, or in South Africa's use of the term "Community Engagement". As former president of the *Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning* (1979), Boyer played a key role in the work and conceptualisation of the roles and functions of universities in the United States. Boyer, speaking to a general criticism of the modern university, agreed that the university had lost its commitment to public service, and argued that a new and redefined commitment to public good was necessary in order to ensure that the work of the university remained relevant and useful.

In *A Scholarship Reconsidered* (1990), Boyer challenged HEIs to move beyond traditional and often narrow understandings of the roles of the university with regard to teaching, research and service. He argued that this is necessary in order to further both traditional knowledge pursuits, and to promote ways in which the university might contribute to the broader public good. His ideas were more than just an interrogation of how universities might increase service outputs, but also focused on how to integrate academic work and service. For him, engaged scholarship was about redefining scholarly work from the application of academic expertise to community engaged scholarship, and in essence, the possible reciprocal partnerships between the university and a broader public or community. Through collaboration between the university community and broader community, he foresaw a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources so that together, the university and affected publics might deliberate on problem solving to advance public good. Boyer explained that a scholarship of engagement "means connecting the rich resources of the

university to our most pressing social, civic and ethical problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teachers and to our cities" (Boyer, 1996:250).

Boyer's proposal of four interlocking functions

In *A Scholarship Reconsidered*, Boyer refers to four kinds of scholarship: "discovery" (research), "integration" (synthesis), "teaching" and "application" (service) to create a conceptual framework for understanding the work of the university.

Boyer explains that the scholarship of discovery and integration are both "investigative and synthesising" traditions of academic life and fulfil the obvious roles of the academy (1990:21).Boyer's scholarship of teaching and learning differs from traditional scholarly teaching as it requires a methodology inclusive of public contributions and sharing, as well as the opportunity for application and evaluation by external community partners. Application, as a form of scholarship, is Boyer's most significant contribution to an understanding of CE as it expanded on the traditional idea of service within the university. This form of scholarship demonstrates the importance of positioning the academic work of the university within broader concerns of society. This is not to argue that this was a new concept within the role of the university, but Boyer's contribution is that he emphasises the way in which all forms of scholarship are intrinsically tied to each other, rather than operating as separate and isolated functions.

Boyer warns his readers that they should not be misled by the notion "scholarship of application" into thinking that scholarship takes place in a linear fashion of discovery and then application (1990:23). He explains that intellectual understandings emerge from application as well, and therefore, it is this bi-directional nature in the relationship between theory and practice that contributes to the growth of human knowledge. Boyer suggests that the roles or functions of the university cannot be understood in isolation, but all parties including the community have something to contribute and something to gain. Thus, what is revealed is that the four general forms of scholarship are all inter-related, and in addition, that the work of the university and the work of society are inter-related. Boyer provides an example of this mutuality and explains that when the researcher asks how the research can be helpful, the "social problems themselves define the agenda" (1990:21). Through this approach, Boyer is able to merge what is valued in the academy and existing needs within society. What Boyer makes visible is that the university-community relationship can be

reciprocal; and it is the synthesis and collaboration, he suggests, that will make the investigation relevant.

According to Boyer, there has been a movement in the academy from teaching, to service, to research. He argues that the undergraduates are all too often the losers when it comes to what education prioritises in practice. For this reason, a major question that centres the debate, according to Boyer, is where faculty concentrates its time, which activities are prized, and how that time is rewarded. While many join the professoriate for their love of teaching or service, Boyer argues that earning status, tenure and promotion are awarded in relation to research outputs. Thus, unless the academy rethinks how university activities are understood, how they are valued, as well as how they are rewarded, teaching and service will fail to reach their full potential and goals in relation to the elevated status of research.

Boyer explains that what is needed is more than just a reconsideration of reward systems. He proposes a new understanding of the actual purpose of activities such as research or theory. Boyer writes: "Theory surely leads to practice. But practice also leads to theory. And teaching, at its best, shapes both research and practice" (1990:16). Boyer highlights what he argues is a disconnect between theory and practice, and he associates this disconnect with a hierarchical reading of the relationship between scholarly and service endeavours. In explanation, Boyer (1990:22) says:

> Clearly, a sharp distinction must be drawn between citizenship activities and projects that relate to scholarship itself. To be sure, there are meritorious social and civic functions to be performed, and faculty should be appropriately recognized for such work. But all too frequently, service means not doing scholarship, but doing good. To be considered scholarship, service activities must be tied directly to one's special field of knowledge and relate to, and flow directly out of, this professional activity. Such service is serious, demanding work, requiring the rigor - and the accountability - traditionally associated with research activities.

In addition to recognising the benefits of connecting the rich resources of the university to society's most critical social, civic, and ethical problems, Boyer also emphasises that both the university and the community have latent resources which are not being recognised and used (Boyer, 1996:32). As a result of Boyer's contributions, there was a move away from the simple application of expert-centric and rationalized knowledge to external communities, in favour of an approach that emphasised *collaboration* between the researcher and practitioners

or community partners. Engagement is a refined understanding of application as scholarship in that it recognises the mutuality of knowledge production and exchange in university-community relations. Boyer's insistence of this mutuality made him a major contributor to how CE is understood within Higher Education.

Boyer (1990) shows that by subverting assumed power positions (such as viewing university members as expert-centric knowledge producers), and by creating partnerships within scholarship, scholarship itself is enriched, as are the professional lives of academics and students. However, at the micro level, how are already socially constructed understandings of power within those relationships subverted, or put another way, can an understanding of reciprocity be taught? Boyer suggests that mutually beneficial exchange may be a positive consequence of university-community relations, but this might be reliant on an understanding of reciprocity within these relations. Building on this idea, Barker (2005:127) says:

> Instead of seeing the public as a passive recipient of expert knowledge, engaged scholarship stresses that the public can itself contribute to academic knowledge. In their undergraduate teaching, engaged scholars typically make a conscious effort to stress the pedagogical value of collaborating with publics instead of providing information to or services for publics.

The shift in how university-community positions are perceived, that is, the assertion that the university members and community members are both simultaneously benefactors and beneficiaries in university-community relations, is thus at the heart of Boyer's contribution.

Boyer argues that if the professoriate is to be enriched bydiversityand is to produce relevant and useful knowledge, research in any particular field must be connected to a context. In doing so, Boyer reveals that scholarship could then be provided the space to be creative rather than restricted to insular academic activities. This is necessary if the university is to be responsive to society's most pressing and shifting needs;to create critical students in preparation for the real world; a professoriate invested in their outputs; as well as useful knowledge.

The Kellogg Commission and a consideration of diverse ontological positions

The Kellogg Commission was hugely influential inpromoting the idea of more engaged institutions in the United States. In January 1996, the first meeting of the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities was held. Like Boyer, this Commission engaged with concerns about the university's accountability to the public and

the role and functions of HEIs. These included concerns about accountability related to student experiences of HE; questions of how useful and relevant knowledge produced in the university is to society; and concerns about HEI's adaptability to changing environments. Concerns about changing environments were not limited to external environments in broader contemporary society, but also to the classroom with regard to the diversity of students and student needs entering the university. Over a period of four years, ending in March 2000, the Commission produced six reports to support universities in bringing about necessary change on their campuses in order to address the above concerns. Much like the work of the Carnegie Foundation and Boyer, the Kellogg Commission had found public perception to be that the university was not connected to society, and that disciplines were isolated and that disciplinary imperatives rather than real world concerns defined what the university set out to do. Despite the resources and expertise available on campuses, institutions were not managing to bring those resources to bear on local problems in a coherent way (2001:13). Thus, the reports "addressed campus issues and called for public universities to join the Commission in 'returning to our roots', becoming once more the transformational institutions they were intended to be" (Kellogg Commission, 2001).

The first five reports focused on the "student experience", "student access", the "engaged institution", a "learning society", and "campus culture". The sixth report called for a renewal of a covenant which would address the concerns of all the preceding reports through a more compact articulation of the quest for a renewed role for the modern university. This report emphasised partnership between the public and the public's universities. Its cornerstones were "learning, discovery, and engagement" in "a new age and a different world" (Kellogg Commission, 2001).

The Commission began with a major focus on the "student". This first report stated that it should not be assumed that a college education ends with a degree. Secondly, the report recommended that the student experience should not be restricted to the fortunate few between the ages of 18 and 25 that are able to attend full time. Lastly, and importantly for debates about CE, the report argued that it should not be assumed that the university experience includes only what happens within campus boundaries (1997: iii). An improved student experience ought to have a positive impact on the efficacy of the university, as well as the broader community. Therefore, while there is a similarity in the work of Boyer and the Kellogg Commission, Boyer focussed on the value of a variety of scholarships, how they are interrelated, and how they are rewarded, while the Commission centred all these arguments

around the student more specifically. For the Commission, if the value of various scholarships were focussed on improving the student experience, not only would the students' experience be improved, but the various forms of scholarship, such as research, teaching and service, would also be enhanced. By implication, greater efficacy of the university should lead to greater public satisfaction and reward.

The Commission's reports make links between what is learnt inside and outside the walls of the university. Recommendations for achieving a more holistic approach include the creation of links between "discovery and learning by providing more opportunities for hands-on learning, including undergraduate research" (1997:ix). An improved student experience within the university would equip them better for their society of which they are a part. However, this raises the question of how improving the student experience at university might benefit society. The Kellogg Commission's third report, "Returning to Our Roots: the Engaged Institution", which is the most utilised of the reports by universities across America to date, tackles this question and relates it to the broader debate on the role of the university in contemporary society.

This third report made particular reference to the kinds of services universities may offer to a community or nation. It concluded that more beneficial services would be possible in the move from outreach to engagement. In this report, the Commission stated:

> Engagement goes well beyond extension, conventional outreach, and even most conceptions of public service. Inherited concepts emphasize a one-way process in which the university transfers its expertise to key constituents. Embedded in the engagement ideal is a commitment to sharing and reciprocity (1999:9).

Thus, if the search for an improved student experience is also about making university resources available to a broader community, reciprocity takes place and engagement becomes more meaningful.

The reports discuss the problems or criticisms of the university, but also provide recommendations or possible alternatives for a way forward. The reports posit that it is public perception that universities are too discipline specific and are "out of touch and out of date" (2001:13). Therefore, despite the expertise and resources available, universities are not bringing their resources to bear on real world problems. All university roles and functions are enriched by engagement with a broader community, and this enrichment is reciprocated by

making expertise and resources available to that community. According to the Commission, for the university to make sure it meets its core roles and functions, scholarly and engagement activities are all measured against whether they work to develop students and help them succeed. Byrne suggests:

> As the commission considered student access, it became readily apparent that the issue was really not access or admission to our institutions, but a more important issue—access to a successful life in society resulting from a higher education experience (2000:15).

Similar to the work of Boyer, the Commission reports were directed to creating more engaged universities. However, while Boyer focussed on a broad view of the relationship between scholarship and a broader community, the Commission related all goals of engagement to what is needed to ensure the success of students. This approach recognises that students are a part of communities outside of the university, and that what is attained within the institution will be taken with them into those communities.

The Gibbons thesis on Mode 2 Knowledge and its search for practical solutions

The "Mode 2 Knowledge" concept expressed by Michael Gibbons, Camille Limoges, Helga Nowotny, Simon Schartzman, Peter Scott and Martin Trow is often referred to as the Gibbons thesis, and stems from their seminal work, *The New Production of Knowledge* (1994). "Mode 2 Knowledge" is an approach to knowledge enquiry and knowledge production (Gibbons et al., 1994). In this approach to producing research, the focus is on how to connect the work of the university with the work of society. For this reason, this contribution has played a role in the conceptualisation of CE.

Unlike purely scientific Mode 1 knowledge production, which is based on the assumption that disciplines are separate with particular roles and functions, Mode 2 knowledge is knowledge production through research methodologies which are interactive and socially distributed. Gibbons et al. (1994:3) argue that Mode 1 knowledge is produced by academics who are seen as the experts, and little credit is given to knowledge produced outside the university. In this exclusionary system, it is the university who decides who can and cannot participate in the production of knowledge, and more importantly, it is the university who decides how knowledge should be evaluated or accredited. The Mode 1 disciplinary structure of knowledge production failed to meet the needs of the new, changing and diverse communities and industries of contemporary society. According to Gibbons et al., (1994:70-

76) the marketisation of universities has resulted in insular disciplines aimed at creating specific skills for specific work places. Gibbons et al. (1994:70-76) refer to this as the massification of HE. Massification is criticised as it negates holistic learning that allows critique, diversification and growth.

In contrast, Mode 2 knowledge production supplements and complements traditional or scientific ways of producing knowledge, rather than replacing them. The reviewed disciplinary structure proposed by Gibbons et al. (1994:9) is as follows:

> This structure provides the guidelines for researchers about what the important problems are, how they should be tackled, who should tackle them, and what should be regarded as a contribution to the field. In its social dimensions, it also prescribes the rules for accrediting new researchers, procedures for selecting new university faculty, and criteria for their advancement within academic life.

"Mode 2 knowledge is carried out in a context of application", explain Gibbons et al. (1994:3). Rather than being disciplinary and hierarchical, Mode 2 knowledge is transdisciplinary, problem orientated, application-based, team-driven, multi-sited, partnership-based, socially useful, heterogenous, quality controlled or mediated, reflexive and responsive. This form of knowledge production is more socially accountable and collaborative on problems identified in localised contexts (1994:3). Jansen (2001), writing in the South African context, extracts five points from the Gibbons thesis, which according to him, highlight challenges the traditional university must meet in order to reach that goal of becoming more engaged. Jansen (2001:509-511) sums up these points as follows:

- Firstly, universities need to learn to share their resources, whether physical, intellectual or financial with other kinds of knowledge producing institutions. As the university is seen as having the monopoly on knowledge production, strategic alliances are often overlooked.
- Secondly, the traditional university needs to actively seek out collaborative partners so that the university itself is situated in contexts where collaborative work can take place on shared problems.
- Thirdly, the adaptability of the university is important. New and changing environments are replacing the laboratory. As the process of application becomes more important to the work of the university, so academic processes of research and teaching will change.
- Fourthly, Mode 2 knowledge requires new reward systems, funding patterns and wider parameters for particular disciplines in transdisciplinary contexts.

- Lastly, massification has affected undergraduate curriculum, and diversification is needed through greater knowledge inquiry, application and testing, knowledge dissemination, and dialogue with knowledge stockbrokers.

It is through responding to such challenges that a more engaged institution is created. There is a call for specialist knowledge that responds to the demands of the market, and what the market deems useful and relevant, which requires that knowledge production be timely and responsive to perpetual flux. This, in the Gibbons thesis, is what challenges the traditional university and creates the call for what he refers to as "a socially distributed knowledge system" (1990:4). What might be deduced is that the university is not the only source of knowledge production, but is part of a network of knowledge producers.

In the Gibbons thesis, the network of knowledge producers within a broader community are often referred to as those who are already experts in a particular field. Therefore, the collaboration of partners and latent resources inside and outside of the university is more particular in the Gibbons thesis than in Boyer's approach for example. Boyer speaks to a more natural or general connection between the scholarship of the university to the community in which the university is situated. In Boyer's work, community partners are not necessarily specified as being a part of any particular industry, whereas the Gibbons thesis is about the active search for research and resources that are already established in particular activities within a community. Notably, the "community" in this socially distributed knowledge system is often industry based in the Gibbons thesis. Despite these differences, the call for more engaged institutions that connect with other knowledge producers outside of the university makes the Gibbons thesis relevant to the CE debate.

In *Learning for an Unknown Future*, Barnett (2004) critiques Mode 2 Knowledge and argues that while it actively searches for solutions through action and participation, it implies that a solution can be designed. In a sense it argues that there is an end game, which negates a process of evolving with a changing, "supercomplex" environment (2004:249; 251). He argues that the "very act of knowing – knowledge having become a process of active knowing – now produces epistemological gaps... [and] always eludes our epistemological attempts to capture it" (2004:251). Therefore, he suggests a Mode 3 form of knowing, "which is a knowing-in-and-with-uncertainty" *(ibid).* For Barnett (2004:254), the "educational task is, in principle, not an epistemological task; it is not one of knowledge or even knowing per se... [but] is primarily an ontological task". He explains that even if HE curriculum "should

pay attention" to "three moments", of "understanding (knowledge), acting (skills) and being (self) – it may be asked: what has all this to do with learning for an unknown future?" (*ibid*). For Barnett (2004:254), under changing conditions, "one goes forward not because one has either knowledge or skills but because one has a self that is adequate to such an uncertain world... [a] being [that] has a will to go on". Barnett (2004:258) writes:

> Being-for-uncertainty does not especially know much about the world nor have at its disposal a raft of skills to deploy in and on the world. Being-for-uncertainty stands in certain kinds of relationships to the world. It is disposed in certain kinds of ways. It is characterised, therefore, by certain kinds of disposition. Among such dispositions are carefulness, thoughtfulness, humility, criticality, receptiveness, resilience, courage and stillness.

Here, the possible hubris of HEIs as knowledge producers is confronted, and a question of ethics of knowledge in action or through engagement is brought to the fore. The inclusion of Barnett in this discussion is not to critique the work of Gibbons et al. Rather, his work may be helpful in viewing what the work of the Gibbons thesis, Kellogg Commission reports, and Boyer's report contribute to understanding the CE concept. In reflection on Barnett's (2004) approach to learning, one might argue that Boyer's contribution questions university-community ways of knowing (the epistemological); that the Kellogg Commission questions ways of being, or the different ontologies that participate in university-community relations, with a particular focus on students and their well-being (the ontological), and that the Gibbons thesis relates to possible practical solutions (action). Together, the contributions help navigate the HE search for more holistic approaches to knowledge, despite uncertainties, and in collaboration with the societies of which these institutions are a part.

Doing, Being and Becoming through CE

Transformation through CE speaks to a variety of issues, such as the potential to create strong citizenship; socio-political and economic transformation in society; or the purpose of the university itself through what is valued and what is desired. In view of the relationship between "engaged scholarship" or CE and "social transformation", it could be said that both concepts imply a degree of action, as both engagement and transformation relate to, or are a result of certain activities. In this way, CE or engaged scholarship might come to be understood as pointing to the necessity for universities to *be* actional. By this we mean that knowledge pursuits are only given credibility if they fulfil a particular purpose. However,

purpose itself must be questioned by asking what function knowledge plays in society, or more precisely, for whom and why do we produce knowledge. Kajner explains that:

> This kind of engaged scholarship requires attending to both the epistemological and ontological dimensions of engagement with community partners. It requires asking questions about what we can know, and who we can become, together (2013:9-10).

In this regard, CE speaks to this particular role of the university, that being a relationship that questions *who we can become, together*, and therefore, the civic responsibility of universities.

The Conceptualisation of Community Engagement in South Africa

In light of the above three key sets of ideas discussed, whether framed as engaged scholarship, an enhanced student experience through real world learning, or applied knowledge to societal problems, the result is various interpretations of how universities relate to a broader community. These contributions have influenced policies and practices of HEIs world-wide and in South Africa. Within the South African context, it is the country's history and political atmosphere that animates and directs post-1994 CE policy and practice (Badat, 2009; Reddy, 2004).

In South Africa, the call for transformation within the HE sector is a response to the recognition of the flawed socio-political and economic structure of the apartheid regime still in operation at present and the role education might play in contributing to the necessary changes (Lazarus, 2001; Lazarus et al., 2008;Waghid, 2002). This transformation project is a response to the need to educate people as citizens for a new society that takes seriously the demand for equality (Waghid, 2009).

HEIs have a responsibility to redress disparities resulting from unequal investment in education for racial groups, and inequality in access to resources in the apartheid regime (Badat, 2009; CHE, 2004; Hall and Symes, 2005; Higgens, 2007). International resistance against the apartheid regime resulted in extreme isolation that affected knowledge production in South African HEIs. The challenge in developing global integration was both a national agenda and necessary in order to transform the HE sector (Draper et al., 2006:7; Jansen, 2002:507). One way in which HEIs demonstrated a commitment to transformation and a more equitable society was through the implementation of CE policy and practice.

The 1997 *White Paper on Higher Education* provided clear and comprehensive policy positions for the reconstruction of the South African HE system. CE was identified as having a very particular purpose, where the need for redress, reconstruction and redistribution would be central to the struggle for social justice within HEIs. The university, as part of the new South African society, now had both a place and a duty. The positioning of CE as integral to the role of HEIs was significant, as through this policy, it was recognised as a national priority. Even if this has yet to be realised in practice, the policy gave CE equal weighting alongside teaching, learning and research (Singh, 2001). The policy called on HEIs to "demonstrate social responsibility ... and their commitment to the common good by making available expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes". Furthermore, the goals provided a platform "to promote and develop social responsibility and awareness among students of the role of HE in social and economic development through community service programmes" (DoE: 1997).

Following the change in regime in 1994, Subotzky and other influential scholars such as Ahmed Bawa, Nico Cloete, Joe Muller, Mala Singh and Andre Kraak recognised the strengths of the Gibbons thesis in the South African context, and integrated these ideas into their reworking of HE policy (Jansen, 2002:507; Ministry and Department of Education, 2000; Subotzky, 1997; Subotzky, 2000:88-92). The Gibbons et al. university-industry partnership provided an understanding of how this kind of scholarship based on partnership might contribute to fast-tracking socio-economic growth nationally, as well as South Africa’s position within the global community. Furthermore, it provided a means to closing the gap between local and global needs, and provided potential solutions to ways in which universities might contribute with more immediate effect in the societies in which they are situated. The influence of Mode 2 Knowledge was clearly evident in the proceeding policy documents, namely the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE), the subsequent White Paper on Higher Education (DoE White Paper 3, 1997), as well as the White Paper on Science and Technology (Jansen, 2002:507). In rewriting education policy, it was important to interpret CE in the South African context, rather than merely following other international influences or global trends.

Through the work of Subotzky and others, South Africa began to conceptualise a place for CE within HE. Subotzky provided critical insights into an understanding of South Africa's socio-economic conditions in relation to HE. Similarly to how the Gibbons thesis referred to

the market university as the "massification" of education, Subotzky noted the "marketization of knowledge" in the South African context. In response to capitalist or economic needs being prioritised over social needs, Subotzky offered a theory, which he referred to as a "complementary alternative" (2000:92). His proposal was a framework that integrated both development and equity. It promoted inclusivity of global relations and influence, but challenged enslavement to such influence. Rather than a purely capitalist vision, Subotzky argued that catering to market needs should not be prioritised over the struggle toward social justice. Subotzky also argued that "a fundamental shift is necessary... from seeing the role of the university as providing applied knowledge to help in the solution of problems, to one in which the university is *jointly responsible* for social change… [so that] the institution becomes an advocate for social justice" (Subotzky, 1998: 20).

With major socio-economic inequality in South Africa, Subotzky's argument was that if university knowledge production was directed toward development, reconstruction and redistribution, it might naturally help bridge the divisions between HE and society. Thus, the university could support the national project to alleviate major socio-economic challenges within South African society, as well as transformation of the internal labour force and responses to needs of the external market.

A major concern was balancing this HE role in promoting the public good with the need to introduce general standards in relation to knowledge production. As Kraak argues:

> The challenge of new state policy on higher education today is not so much to try to specify the exact institutional shape – for example a binary or unified structure – but rather to place the greater emphasis on the regulatory environment. The regulatory environment will have a dual task: to establish a single coherent national system of norms, rules and procedures to steer the entire educational project in directions that are consistent with key economic, social and cultural goals, and to facilitate in an orderly fashion the diversity and responsiveness now an intrinsic part of all modern systems of higher education (2000: 13).

In this way, CE becomes an important feature of HE in which agreed upon transformational goals may be interpreted through a variety of practices at individual HEIs, but the national project remains consistent. As Kraak points out, internal reform is important if these institutions are to achieve the goals they desire. As a consequence, the work then lies in finding out how top-down national agendas can meet bottom-up interpretation and practice.

In post-1994 HE, balancing social and economic needs became a key theme to the relationship between new knowledge production, and the engagement with both local and global communities which are required if universities are to undergo transformation.

The practice of CE post-policy implementation

South African CE policy provides evidence of the national commitment to transformation in HE. This, however, is less clear concerning conceptualisation and practice of CE in individual HEI's (Kruss, 2012). For this reason, CHE hosted a colloquium in March 2009, at which many academics from across South Africa had the opportunity to debate the CE concept (see Kagisano, 2010). The focus was on how South African HEIs understand the role of the university within society, and therefore, what they believe the role of CE might be for individuals and communities. This entailed a discussion on what is taking place, or what ought to take place in order to realise the CE goals as set out in South African HE policy.

The 2009 colloquium resulted in a publication bringing together key contributors to South African debates about CE (Kagisano, 2010). It begins with a contribution by Martin Hall (2010) who argues that the university forms part of a third space separate from both the government and market. He focuses on how understanding HE as a part of this third sector might contribute to understanding the role of HE within broader society. Following Hall's response to the call for greater CE conceptualisation, a group of academics from across South Africa offered critique in response to Hall's recommendations. Alongside the valuable critiques, the contributors seemed to share relative consensus concerning two main aspects: that CE should be understood as a process rather than being governed by a stringent definition; and secondly, a call to respect a diversity of understandings, interpretations and choices in what kind of ways CE is practiced (see contributions by Favish, Muller, Nongxa and Slamat). This is a recognition that different universities are responding to different contexts, which also vary in resource capabilities and priorities. There is a clear argument that bottom up interpretation and practice are as important as top down agreed upon goals. Thus, whether authors focussed on historical perspectives or provided conceptual frameworks in the search for meaning in the CE concept, the authors as academics in South African HEIs

emphasised that it was important for individuals to find ways of connecting traditional university roles with CE roles and practices, collectively and independently.

A special edition publication on CE was released by the CHE in 2012 following a CE conference held in East London in 2011 (Akpan et al., 2012). In this 2012 contribution, the focus was on a search for the university's role in "development", or as referred to in the publication, the "developmental university". The overall aim was to find points at which individual practices and the broader theoretical understandings or goals could meet. A variety of responses were presented, such as conceptual frameworks, contextual themes, and individual institution practices, which provided a baseline or comparative positions in order to explore CE as a developmental goal in South Africa. The 2010 and 2012 publications provide an overview of the South African CE narrative following implementation of the 1997 HE policy, and CE in its current form and position almost twenty years later.

As briefly referred to in the previous section on global CE contributions, Barnett (2004) provides a useful lens in the HE context. In order to examine the narratives that form part of the South African archive of CE debate, this lens will be revisited. As Barnett suggests, through university-community relations, an engagement with the world and an understanding of it through personal experience or a sense of *being* awakens a greater investment in approaches to learning. This investment happens at two levels: the operational and the ontological. For him, the combination of knowledge (epistemology), action (practice) and being (ontology) provides a more holistic approach to learning (Barnett, 2004). When applied to the recent South African debate, this lens posed by Barnett offers an interesting space for reflection.

Core themes in the South African CE debate

In search of conceptual clarity – the epistemological challenge

In this section, I explore the epistemological frames relating to how CE is understood in the South African context. As CE is a relatively new aspect of HE in South Africa, academics and university-community members have begun the debate: What do we in South Africa understand or *know* CE to be?

Hall argues that there is an "epistemological disjuncture" relating to the lack of conceptual clarity of the CE concept, and without such theorisation, what shall remain are the limitations

and challenges that prevent greater implementation of CE functions (2010:7). Hall suggests that if CE were to be viewed as related to "public goods emanating from higher education" this *third sector* would represent another part of society, "that part of civil society" located alongside the "state and the market" (2010:7). He shows that the state, market and civil society all have a stake in national transformation. Thus, CE is then the way in which HE might make a contribution as a part of civil society, and to that society. This contribution was important to the contemporary CE debate, as Hall's proposal was an attempt to locate CE's position, both within HE and within society, in the South African context. The aim was to introduce a place and purpose for CE; and an institutional stance on what HEIs might contribute to a national mandate for transformation.

Nongxa, like many others, does not dispute Hall's suggestions on the potential functions or roles CE might play within HE, but argues that this "third sector" itself required further definition (Nongxa, 2010:59). According to him, understanding CE as *social responsiveness* would make CE easier to understand and implement. Echoing Boyer, Nongxa argues that the intent behind "notions of community engagement is that intellectual enquiry be brought to bear on conditions of human distress in any, or all of its forms, ultimately with the intent of relieving or eliminating it" (Nongxa, 2010:64). He adds that there is no doubt that "this impulse for higher education to contribute... [to] alleviating poverty" is a "goal that we all share" (Nongxa, 2010:64-65).Instead, as Nongxa explains, the problem is more about a "poor collective understanding of the academic profession in the 21st Century" (2010:64-65). Therefore, for a better understanding of contemporary South African academia, HEIs must look at the historical conditions – what we do know – in order to understand our present position, as well as at the new issues that arise in changing environments; or as Nongxa says, we need to look at the "old and the new...and they range from external contextual conditions, the inherent internal characteristics of the academy, and the relationship between the external and the internal" (2010:65).

In Nongxa's notion of "social responsiveness", the emphasis is less around how to respond to the policy makers' challenges in conceptualising CE for practitioners, but rather, is a return to those practitioners and what they might already do. Nongxa's focus on a return to the "academic soul" explains that it is through these academics that HE imperatives become possible, and he maintains that change must happen from the inside if policy is to be successful (2010:66). In explanation, Nongxa posits, "academic souls are attracted to

academic life because it provides them with the space and freedom to pursue and play with ideas that appeal to their respective intellectual talents", but that "if this commitment is seen to be compromised through the imposition of ideas that are not consistent with the academic endeavour, then it should not be surprising that certain ideas fail to flourish" (2010:66). Nongxa emphasises the importance of the relationship at the centre of the CE concept, the point at which the work of the academy or academic work meets societal needs in order to maintain the integrity of HEIs. Thus, Nongxa shifts attention from Hall's "third sector" as an epistemological solution in the search for clearer definition, to the need for ontological consideration that includes those who participate in CE practices in order to give the CE concept meaning.

Slamat, like Nongxa, also responds to the "obscurity" of the *third sector* proposed by Hall as a concept for CE. Slamat (2010) provides another dimension to this debate when he says that we should not be too quick to pin down a meaning for CE. He argues:

> I do not think that to arrive at a shared conception of community engagement is impossible, but would not want to regard it as a starting point, rather as something to work towards through a deliberative process. The problem is not that there is no definition of community engagement at South African higher education institutions; there are different definitions in different institutions. I [like others] do not think this is a problem. I think this is in order, as a starting point. (Slamat, 2010:108-109).

Perhaps CE cannot be defined with reference to particular activities, but rather should be understood to relate to a set of values through which all other university activities, roles or functions ought to take place. Thus, CE may be seen as a process that ideally takes place as part of the usual functions of the university. Even if CE cannot be simply defined, to give the concept meaning we must, as a starting point, be able to identify its purpose, and what it aims to achieve.

For Slamat, the 1997 White Paper on Higher Education marked a shift in previously accepted HE outlooks and started a national conversation on what we understand the role of the university to be. He argues that we should not try to "define from scratch what community engagement means", but should rather look at "how its meaning and role in the practice of scholarship has changed" with regard to the expectations of education legislation (2010:110). Furthermore, for Slamat, it is not so much about the definition of a *third sector*, but

understanding CE as “integral to the practice of scholarship” so that CE helps “the university to perform its core functions in a more meaningful way” (2010:110;112).

Shifts in CE definition and conceptualisation

As Slamat and other academics point out, historically there have been “notions of outreach, community service or extension in South African higher education institutions”, but these were not the “core business of universities” and they were peripheral “philanthropic and voluntary activities” (2010:109). However, in many cases, such outreach activities have evolved to sophisticated partnerships at both local and global levels.

Supporting Nongxa’s appeal for contextualising CE and HE historically, Muller provides a trajectory of CE in South African HE, traced from the mid-1980s to the late 2000s. Through this historical perspective, Muller traces shifts and changes, as well as continuities, in search of already established practices and those not yet fully developed (2010:85). Thus, according to him, it is about the importance of investigating already existing CE practices. He writes:

> The most active researchers are likely to be the ones that are engaged in the public domain in one way or other way. If academics are not engaged, it may well be that they are not research active either. In which case, university transformation should start here, not with intensified calls for engagement (2010:85).

While existing practices are important for further conceptualisation of CE, identifying what is, or is not considered CE practice remains complex. In the following 2011 CHE colloquium, Pienaar-Steyn pointed out:

> CE ranges from outreach activities, such as painting schools in local communities, to national research projects on unemployment rates; it also covers programmes for service learning. Since the concept is vague, academics have difficulty in defining their contribution. Many academics resort to activities such as painting crèches in an attempt to tick a box on their performance contracts; others participate in CE activities without reporting them as they do not view their scholarly activities of research and teaching as CE (2012:41).

Thus, although the ways in which CE is conceptualised have evolved, there are barriers that continue to limit practices of CE. Pienaar-Steyn’s statement draws attention to some of these issues. Firstly, do the measurements that require academics to “tick boxes” not imply that CE activities are not integral to the core activities of the university, and rather fall into a separate category, such as outreach without a considered connection to scholarship? Secondly, much

of the CE literature and policies warn against the university intervening in communities and emphasise that the relationships should be based on mutually beneficial partnerships so as not to become an unnecessary imposition in their attempts to offer skill specified solutions aligned with the scholarly roles of the university. Therefore, without clear definitions that allow for clear measures for evaluation and accountability, how does one protect both members of the university community and members of the broader community from unbeneficial practices? Thus, the epistemological disjuncture continues, as without agreed upon goals or aims, the recognition of practices of CE taking place, as well as benchmarking mechanisms are limited.

Rather than a focus on the goals of CE, Kenn, participating in the same colloquium, shifts the focus to how engagement itself is understood. He draws attention to the difference between wisdom and education emphasising the need to recognise the knowledge being excavated from communities outside of the university community itself (2011:1;14). As Kenn posits:

> While Universities may have significantly more educational resources than disadvantaged communities in which they're engaged, the wisdom the communities bring to the collaborations far exceeds that of the University partners (2011:1).

Thus, perhaps it is not just a question of what CE is, or what it ought to do according to a prescriptive definition, but relates to who it is that participates. CE is a university-community relationship or partnership, but who participates is intrinsically tied to the various forms CE will infer in practice. University-community stakeholders will shape the purpose of a CE practice in each instance of engagement or interaction. This is because it is university-community partners that will negotiate what forms of engagement will take place, and this includes expected gains and contributions. It is those engagements that will reveal the ways in which CE is interpreted in practice, and only then might one measure the successes or limitations of those engagements. As Nongxa had argued, it is important to collect those descriptions by those already practicing CE, and for Kenn, this suggests the inclusion of descriptions from community partners. Thus, in the South African debate, it is the practice of CE in particular contexts that give CE meaning and contributes to its broader or shared conceptualisation. In the above reflections, a shift takes place from epistemological to ontological concerns.

Bottom up and top down approaches – bringing in the ontological

Barnett (2004) emphasises the importance of considering the ontological, and when understanding the meaning of CE, careful attention should be paid to the way in which *who* participates in CE relations shapes its meaning. This implies that we should pay careful attention to what CE practitioners are already doing.

For example, Favish recommends a bottom-up approach that focuses on those participating in CE practices. This is illustrated through what she refers to as "portraits of practice" (2010:91). This is a process of documenting case profiles of the already existing engagements between the university and other community stakeholders to create an annual report on social responsiveness (Favish, 2010:91).

Following experience with this kind of documentation for the annual report, Favish lists some of the concerns around social responsiveness. She explained that some university members perceived the "focus on social responsiveness [as] necessary in order to monitor how the University of Cape Town (UCT) was addressing its commitment to playing an active developmental role in South Africa's cultural, economic, political, scientific and social environment" (2010:90). Alternatively, other members viewed the focus on social responsiveness as possibly "undermining the importance of basic research" (Favish, 2010:90). Another concern was the term itself, and Favish explains: "*responsiveness* could result in a narrow instrumentalist view of the role of the university in society rather than thinking about how the university promotes the wider public good through public debate and producing critical and analytical thinkers required for building a solid democracy" (2010:90-91). For this reason, the university decided to modify their approach in producing the annual *Social Responsiveness* report. Instead, they decided to use "descriptive case profiles, or *portraits of practice*" (Favish, 2010:91). These narratives were intended to stimulate debate on university-community relations and its effect on scholarship (2010:91). In her explanation, the use of "portraits of practice as the basis for developing a conceptual framework for responsiveness" is specific to the UCT context. The framework avoids narrow definitions and is based on conversations at the institutional level (2010:91).

It is apparent in the contributions of academics like Favish that there is a call for a bottom-up approach from those disciplines, sectors or projects that are already proving themselves successful. As evidenced in the contributions, CE is not necessarily a solution to be applied in all areas of the university. As suggested by Muller, perhaps, CE as a third pillar of the

university is an innate extension to various aspects of our knowledge pursuits, production and dissemination. This is because the search for knowledge ought to be with reference to a lived experience or broader community (Muller, 2010:85). However, as evidenced by some of the concerns raised by Favish and others, holding institutions accountable for their various practices cannot necessarily be a top-down or bottom-up application, but a practice that is informed by and accounted for through CE policy, university practitioners and community partners.

Developmental discourse – the call for action

The epistemological frames of understanding provide "what" CE is understood to be. The ontological aspect of CE, particularly in the South African debate, focuses on the "who" it is that participates in CE. Together, individual and collective meaning – "what" and "who" – creates *action* as it reveals the "why" and "how" CE ought to be practiced. This is because how those individual university-community participants approach CE, and with the available resources considered, CE responds to particular needs – why we do CE – and this will shape interpretations and practices.

As practices of CE are taking place, it is not only a question of how CE is conceptualised, but whether it achieves what it sets out to do. Muller questions whether calls for universities to promote "development" adequately accommodate the promotion of "social conscience and the greater concern for the 'public good' that the advocates for community engagement are urging" (2010:84). Perhaps the potential for CE initiatives that are able to bring latent resources to the fore do need to be highlighted; and this begins with the promotion of the possibilities CE initiatives might offer. This is central to the developmental discourse, as it is then both experience and possibility that form part of educating the university community on how to conceptualise and develop a CE praxis in individual HEI contexts.

Similarly to Gibbon's Mode 2 Knowledge (1994), Mott explains, curricula "must involve practitioners as well as academics in teaching so they can offer the combination of knowledge, skills, and vision which are needed to have an impact on the fundamental issues which face our societies", as through "experience, trial and error… they will develop far more quickly if they have an opportunity to learn through a combination of structured learning opportunities, practice and critical reflection" (Mott, 2005 *cited in* Berman and Allen, 2011:1). Furthermore, not only do these experiences feed into teaching and learning,

but the questions that arise out of such experiences may stretch beyond course work requirements and provide opportunities for further research. Thus, in addition to the university attempts to contribute socio-economic development in society, engagement should lead to the development of scholarship.

How then does the university measure its impact on society, or the impact a broader community has on scholarship? Furthermore, who is it that decides what we consider development to be? The South African debate begins by arguing that perhaps limitations on practice are linked to poor conceptualisation. Thus, academics argue that to better understand the CE concept, we should look to existing, contextual practices. When reflecting on existing practices, the concern rests in how successes or limitations are measured, and by whom? As Olowu explains, a distinction can be made between "knowledge-transfer" and "knowledge-exchange" (2012:98). He explains that "the latter is seen as involving authentic engagement action that promotes questioning by the public, and listening and involvement from staff and students" (Olowu, 2012:98). The importance placed on mutually beneficial partnerships is about how to prevent university members from prescribing solutions, and rather, working with community members in search of solutions. This should lead to the university being a part of the facilitation of projects due to expertise and resources available to them, rather than imposing solutions and ideas. This has become an important aspect in planning CE practices. Perhaps then, one of the first steps in the search for concrete benchmarking standards that measure these impacts, is through questioning the nature of university-community partnerships formed.

As evidenced by the debate, for CE to be worthwhile, CE needs to prove that development is taking place, and this is not possible without clear communication and benchmarking standards from both sides of the partnership. Significant shifts take place in the debate, as not only is it about the *epistemological* questioning of what CE is or ought to be, nor limited to the *ontological* positions that participate, but CE *action*, and the manner in which CE is practiced. Benchmarking is about making all three processes, the epistemological, the ontological and action, ethical and accountable.

Situating the student in the university-community dialectic

In South Africa, contemporary CE literature and policies position students as both "agents" and "beneficiaries" of CE (Maistry and Thakrar, 2012:58;62). Maistry and Thakrar (2012:62)

comment that while a shift in how students are perceived in CE relations has taken place, it is not yet clear how those students might be prepared for university-community engagement and their roles in the various CE programmes being made available to them. The focus on the effect CE might have on students was important at South Africa's transition, as the end of the apartheid brought about an optimism that from the transition forward, students would be educated to see themselves as equal citizens (Hammett and Staeheli, 2013:309; Waghid, 2009). Hammett and Staeheli argue that when negotiating principles such as redress, development and equality, other contradictory pressures arise. For instance, teachers are "tasked with instilling ideals of equality and social justice amidst a context shaped by entrenched social and spatial inequalities" (2013:309). Thus, careful consideration of how students are prepared for engagement is necessary in order to mitigate risk of perpetuating entrenched social divisions or impeding the objectives envisioned. Despite contradictions and uncertainties, perhaps it is not necessarily about viewing CE as a mechanism to be applied that will on its own completely transform HE, but rather about noting that CE might contribute to making transformation possible. There is clear consensus on the need for change and transformation, and as a starting point, perhaps CE might offer precisely that. Closer introspection on the roles community-university stakeholders assume, as Maistry and Thakar (2012) suggest, is necessary to ensure that practices are considered, that they are ethical and accountable.

Berman and Allen (2011; 2002), Bezuidenhout and Frewen (2011) and many others reveal the importance of CE as a means to inculcate a sense of citizenry and values in their respective disciplines, as well as how such experiences outside of the institution itself create richer intellectual projects. While different disciplines require or allow different levels and kinds of engagement with an environment outside of the university itself, what is revealed by the applications presented in the case studies is that regardless of how "community" or "engagement" is interpreted, engagement with the "community" of any kind should provide the space students need to become more aware of their social environments, and thus, better equipped to interpret their disciplines, or the relevance of any given university activity in relation to their role as citizens. The CE experience should result in a greater critical engagement for students in their scholarly pursuits.

In the above contributions to the South African CE debate, what is revealed is that the conceptualisation of CE in South Africa resonates with international conceptualisation and

contributions. As Boyer's work suggests, the promotion of service does not have to be separate from the intellectual knowledge project of the university. When the work of the university is steered toward public good, both service and the knowledge project should be achieved and enriched. This is what is referred to as "engagement", and is the point at which the contributions of these scholars resonate, with one another, and with the aim of transformation in South Africa. This requires, as Barnett (2004:254) suggests, that we continue to experience, consider and reflect upon "three moments": the "understanding (knowledge), acting (skills) and being (self)" that shape CE in practice; a significant deliberation relevant to the needs and voices discussed in the South African CE context.

Conclusion

As reflected in this chapter, CE is not easily defined. Rather, CE is a process that ties together and works through the traditional functions of the university. It may be argued that for some, CE is a natural process to be employed and developed. For others, CE may be interpreted as a political position where the process is an active and decisive measure in which to achieve university practices and knowledge projects that can do public good. The university, for instance, is a space of privilege, but not necessarily privilege that operates at the expense of others. The university may be positively or negatively positioned as privileged depending on how resources in the privileged space are utilised. Therefore, if the resources of the university work in unison with the resources and opportunities embedded in the surrounding communities, activities are enriched allowing for additional, even if not yet realised, possibilities and benefits, which continue to develop and change with their context.

As CE cannot easily be defined, it gains meaning through practice. In order to find meaning, CE must be tried, interpreted, practiced and reflected upon, thereby leading to further theorising, articulation and understanding. Thus, Boyer's explanation of the relationship between theory and practice contributes to how CE might be understood as a process rather than a definition, as theory ignites practice, and practice ignites theory. It is this bi-directional relationship that gives meaning to CE as a concept, potentially culminating in a praxis or culture of CE.

While the contributions by Boyer, the Kellogg Commission and Gibbons are approaches to, rather than particular practices of CE, these approaches provide different angles or perspectives of how CE might be understood. Boyer focuses on the inter-relationship between scholarships and how those scholarships connect the internal and external

communities that make the scholarship possible. The Kellogg Commission uses a student-centred approach to connect the work of the university with the work of a broader community in questioning what it is students learn for, for what end, and how best to achieve a more holistic form of learning through the university and its relationship to a broader community. The Gibbons thesis has a more direct approach with regard to particular activities of the university that have an existing partner within the broader community. Like Boyer, Gibbons acknowledges latent resources in both the university and broader community that together offer greater benefit to both sides of the partnership. This Mode 2 form of knowledge production connects the Mode 1 knowledge production with practical problems in the field within a broader community. The three contributions all emphasise that engagement enriches the university to the benefit of the community in a mutually beneficial exchange.

With particular reference to South African HE, the three contributions may help conceptualise how CE might be understood in this context. However, it is this particular South African context, and the practice of CE within this context, that will give meaning to CE in relation to the transformation project as called for in the 1997 White Paper, which positions CE as a third pillar in post-1994 South African HE, alongside teaching and research.

CE has clearly been divided into different areas of function, despite the concern around the absence of a clear definition. Whether practices fall within the categories of service-learning, outreach or volunteerism, what seems to override a need for definition is an understanding of CE as a *process* encompassing various functions. What the work of the 2009 and 2011 colloquiums (and subsequent publications) show is that understanding CE as a process could possibly provide greater opportunities by mitigating the limitations created by prescriptive discourse. The second colloquium did shift the focus toward CE as a developmental process, and therefore, to the question of how development might be measured. In this case, benchmarking CE activities was central to the debate alongside a continuation of how CE might be articulated and theorised.

Whether from a global or local perspective, there is consensus that by steering the work of the university toward social good, the work of the university becomes more useful and relevant. Moreover, the inclusion of CE as a university mission is a political position, as it becomes an active steering mechanism in attempt to achieve developmental outcomes for both the university and the community. As mentioned above, while this may demand some

changes in how the university operates in the shift from the traditional university to a more engaged university, a major challenge has been to ensure that engagement is understood as a mission that steers the university roles and functions as opposed to add-on outreach. Activities shaped by a philosophy of CE allow the university approach to scholarship to be more responsive to changing and dynamic environments. CE is not a solution with regard to university reform that can be activated through the application of particular additional activities. Rather, CE enriches existing activities. CE, it is argued, has the potential to transform the student experience, and perhaps, students themselves as citizens of their communities.

Chapter 3

Community Engagement at Rhodes University

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, there is much debate about whether and how to define CE. As CE is understood in different ways in different contexts, this chapter will look at how CE is conceptualised and practiced at the university under discussion here, Rhodes University. The chapter will situate this university in the South African context, and within Grahamstown, the home of Rhodes University, in particular. As the Student Volunteering Programme (SVP) is the main focus of this study, this chapter will give particular attention to it; differentiating the SVP's form and function from other forms of CE practice at Rhodes University. The chapter will also provide a brief overview of the methodology used in collecting student perceptions of the SVP at Rhodes, as well as an introduction to the students who participated in this study.

Situating Rhodes University in the South African context

Grahamstown, the home to Rhodes University, is a small city in the Eastern Cape in South Africa, which in many ways is a microcosm of the rest of the country. It is now more than twenty years since the country's first democratic elections, but despite political emancipation, the process of redress and redistribution is still in its infancy, and a history of violence and discrimination is not yet a memory. Race and wealth continue to define the divisions in the socio-economic and political landscape of the country and of the city of Grahamstown. The city is split in two with the university town and small economic centre on the one side and the township areas on the other. In these township areas, the struggle to access clean water, good education and healthcare contributes to the hardship of the community. The history of colonisation and apartheid in the Grahamstown area has continuing material consequences that create a stark contrast between the rich resources of the university and the poverty of much of the rest of the city.

Contextualising Rhodes University and its implementation of Community Engagement

At present, the Grahamstown area in the Makana district, which has a population of around 100 000 people, has an exceptionally high unemployment rate. Roodt explains that the search for economic opportunities and service provision has led to people moving from

neighbouring farms and rural areas to this city. As a result, there has been an increase in the informal settlement population, but as Roodt argues, overall population figures vary as there is "a lack of real knowledge as to the extent of these informal settlements" (2013:11). Roodt comments on the "strong linkage between the unemployment rate and the level of poverty" and says the "poverty levels in Makana and Grahamstown are unacceptably high, sitting at 30,303 people or nearly 40% of the population (39.4%)" (2013:14).This high unemployment rate is partly responsible for the poverty in the area, and with the lack in public services or access to opportunities, exacerbates poor living conditions.

Rhodes University plays a significant role in the economy of the city. With very little industrial or agricultural work available in the area, much of the economy is made up of small businesses, many of whom cater to the needs of the Rhodes University community. For this reason, the university is seen as contributing positively to the Grahamstown area as it contributes to the economy and employment. However, the university is also considered, to some extent, to be responsible for perpetuating socio-economic disparities. This is evident in the lack of upliftment of the local community who have been disadvantaged by the apartheid regime and who appear to remain economically disenfranchised. The 2005 Rhodes Community Engagement Policy document says:

> There is a unique and integral relationship that exists between Rhodes and its community, each reliant on the other for sustainability. Rhodes University, the largest employer in the town, contributes approximately 60% of Grahamstown's GDP (2005h:2).

This precarious relationship might be understood through the historical context already discussed. It also contextualises current approaches to CE at Rhodes University.

In order to contextualise the current position the university holds, it is important to note the following: Rhodes University is a "traditional university", which produces theoretically-oriented degrees (Boughey, 2011; du Pré, 2009). It is one of the most prestigious universities in South Africa, yet one of the smallest in the country with an enrolment of around 7500 students. As the university is rich in resources, and because the Grahamstown community is relatively small, Rhodes may be considered to have the capacity to contribute to needs of the local community. Therefore, the Rhodes Community Engagement Policy document (2005h; 2012b:9-10) recognises the need for social responsibility aligned with teaching and research mandates. In this policy document the aims of CE are outlined as follows:

- Developing shared values that embrace basic human and civil rights;
- Acknowledging and being sensitive to the problems created by the legacy of apartheid and ensuring that appropriate corrective measures are employed to address past imbalances;
- Producing critical, capable and balanced graduates who are aware of their social responsibilities;
- Making available the university's expertise, resources and facilities where appropriate.

The position adopted by the university does not suggest that the university is responsible for the Grahamstown community, the economy, its successes or its limitations, but that as a part of the community it shares certain struggles and benefits, and as a member of that community, will have certain responsibilities.

CE should be a natural response of the university to the needs of its local and broader communities because the university is an aggregation of expertise. These resources might be applied to the benefit of the community, and in turn, provide learning or research opportunities. Thus, it may be argued that CE, even if not formally acknowledged, has always been a part of university practice. The 1997 White Paper encouraged the formalisation of CE within HEI's in the post-1994 context. This national policy document led to the 2005 Rhodes Community Engagement Policy document, and the establishment of Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) in 2010. However, CE at Rhodes existed in different forms prior to the establishment of its present RUCE status.

The past and present practice of Community Engagement at Rhodes University

In the Rhodes University context, CE first began with the work of the Centre for Social Development (CSD), which came into being in 1981. The CSD operated as an NGO (affiliated to Rhodes) for Early Childhood Development and Community Development projects. In 2002, the CSD initiated a Student Volunteer Programme which provided a platform to promote and develop CE at Rhodes. In 2005, following a national call for CE in HE, the CSD was contracted to implement and manage the new form of university-community engagement, CE at Rhodes. The first Rhodes CE Policy document was produced in 2005. This policy document contained a commitment to the CE principles outlined in the national 1997 White Paper, which proposed that CE be established as a third pillar of HE alongside teaching-learning and research.

The 2005 CE policy document stated that the CSD would facilitate CE, but as CE as a concept and role of the university was expanded and evolved, so its scope extended beyond the functions of the CSD, leading to the establishment of Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE). A review process took place in 2007 where it was decided that CE should be established as an independent division with an official CE office that should report directly to the Vice-Chancellors' Office. It was agreed that this would commence from the end of 2009 when the CSD CE contract ended. For this reason, the RUCE Office opened in order to create and familiarise a CE presence on campus, and a Director for this CE Division was appointed (RUCE, 2014i).

The CSD still focuses on Early Childhood Development (ECD) and their volunteering programmes are now facilitated by RUCE. The CSD offers ECD courses, as well as workshops and training for Community Development Practitioners who join ECD community partner programmes. The CSD programmes are predominantly outreach programmes. The CSD and RUCE are committed to collaborating with community partners on community needs, rather than steering or imposing projects. The CSD has not been replaced by RUCE, but operates in a more specified area. RUCE has a much broader scope in facilitating CE across faculties. Hence, RUCE is a more direct response to the national HE call for social responsibility in the 1997 White Paper.

RUCE as a critical pillar

The RUCE draft concept document (2012b) was created by RUCE and acknowledges that CE cannot be easily defined or reduced to a single purpose. Rather, the concept document states that the lack of clear definition is not due to a lack of consideration, but rather due to a decision to avoid prescription (RUCE, 2012b:7). Therefore, Rhodes takes a particular policy position that allows CE initiatives to be steered by a "best practice" or a "principled approach" so that students, academics and departments choose the best possible approach to suit their particular activities in response to the goals set out in the 2005 policy document. In order to protect both sides of the university-community partnership, CE projects are subject to a risk management policy and a code of ethics policy. Broad definitions of CE at the national level allow for practical and contextual interpretation, and Rhodes University aligns itself with the CE mission as stated in the 1997 White Paper, as well as the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) criteria relevant to RUCE. The RUCE approach is to actively collaborate with community partners so that the practice of CE is an inclusive process.

CE at Rhodes University is defined, to some degree, by the historical presence of the university in Grahamstown. RUCE recognises that Rhodes has contributed to the shaping of the Grahamstown area in both positive and negative ways. In the concept document, RUCE states:

> The idea of the broader Grahamstown simply being a 'laboratory' for Rhodes students is one with a long history covering most faculties and schools. It is not merely lip-service to suggest that Community Engagement is a two-way process. Without the process being 'two-way' it merely perpetuates divisions and inequalities that are already entrenched (2012b:11-12).

For this reason, RUCE aims to prioritise reciprocity in CE activities and provides specific guidelines for university-community relationships that value agency on both sides of the partnership, as well as the sustainability of these relationships and initiatives. Rhodes includes department and student-driven CE activities, which support student volunteering, societies and service-learning, as well as community development projects and a scholarship of engagement. Notably, RUCE describes its mission as promoting "reciprocal" processes of "knowledge construction and dissemination" (2012b:11). The mission statement adds that these processes should "develop and channel the civic and social responsibility of all students, student organisations and staff of Rhodes University through various community engagement activities, thereby contributing to individual transformation and sustainable human and community development in Grahamstown and the Eastern Cape as a whole" (2012b:11). It is evident in both the 2012 and 2014 RUCE concept documents that RUCE has worked to evolve and mature with the needs and transformation of its broader community, and to contribute to the transformation of that community.

Three forms of CE activities at Rhodes University

There are three main activities relating to CE at Rhodes, namely volunteering, service-learning and research. The sections below outline the key aspects of each of these areas of CE activity.

The Student Volunteering Programme

The SVP is made up of student volunteers and community partners, who in collaboration work on a variety of projects. While facilitated by RUCE, the students offer their time to community partners who direct the students on how they might participate. Technically, in terms of university accreditation, student volunteering is extra-curricular. However, it is

important to note that as defined by RUCE, volunteering should no longer be understood as extra-curricular participation as it “provides students with skills that are necessary for the production of well-rounded graduates and good citizens...[and] the soft skills that they need in order to be prepared for their work and social environments” (RUCE, 2014d). Student societies also fall under student CE, but unlike the volunteering programme in which individual students are placed in projects working with community partners, student societies are groups of students who organise around particular issues and who then work in collaboration with community partners.

Service-Learning

Curriculum-based CE is widely referred to as service-learning (SL). This particular kind of engagement is embedded within a university course curriculum and will have a direct or indirect service element (RUCE, 2014g). RUCE distinguishes direct and indirect service as separate approaches to SL. As explained by RUCE, direct service involves face to face interaction and collaboration, either through the discipline-based course work or a project-based course. Indirect service differs slightly in that it can be done independently, but has a clear focus on the impact on a community. In this case, students collect local data to measure the impact of a particular phenomenon and make recommendations for solving the problem. In discipline-based service-learning, students have a presence in the community and connections are made between the classroom learning and the service activity. Project-based service-learning is collaboration between the academic department and community partner where there is a mutually identified problem to work through. In this case, projects and perhaps even community partners will differ from year to year as new problems will be tackled over time. This would prevent dependency between the university and the community, and instead promote collaboration.

Engaged Research

Research-based CE is often referred to as a scholarship of engagement or engaged research. RUCE (2014i) explains that:

> Engaged research is a responsive and respectful way for research to be conducted – in partnership with communities. It is the responsibility of every discipline and every researcher to consider the impact and benefit to society of what they do through engaged research programmes.

Furthermore, as stated by RUCE, a goal of this office is to ensure that the "research partnership" is "transformational, where all participating members understand that they are members of the research community and that their input and active participation is important, not only for the benefit of the research project, but also for knowledge production, the betterment of communities, and more broadly, the betterment of society" (RUCE, 2014i). RUCE highlights that as a HEI, and as scholars, members of the university can contribute to confronting the challenges within society.

When comparing the above three CE activities, service learning and engaged research may appear to have a much clearer connection to the traditional functions of the university as they function within the teaching, learning and research activities of the university. The SVP is extra-curricular and not necessarily related to a student's chosen academic discipline, and therefore, one might ask whether or not the SVP is a relevant function of the university. Thus, one might ask, is volunteering a social responsibility that works outside of the institution, or is there something to be *learned* through the SVP that is relevant to students' education? As noted in Chapter 2, one of the roles of the university is to inculcate a sense of social responsibility and citizenship. This thesis asks whether students are transformed through participation within the SVP – do they indeed develop a greater sense of social responsibility and citizenship? In order to explore this question, students participating in the SVP were invited to participate in this study.

Methodology

CE is a collaboration between university and community partners, and inter-community relations, which may be understood and experienced differently by the diverse range of participants. Participant perceptions are valuable as they contribute to the body of CE knowledge, and the advancement of CE practices at RUCE in particular. This study explores the experiences and perceptions of one specific CE stakeholder group in the university-community dialectic: a small group of volunteers participating in the RUCE SVP.

As already discussed, the RUCE policy is a response to the South African context and the national transformation agenda. Furthermore, the RUCE policy (2005h) objective is to make "available the university's expertise, resources and facilities" and graduate "critical, capable and balanced" citizens aware and sensitive to "social responsibilities". This study explores the student experience of the SVP, as it asks: are the goals of transformation being reached, and more specifically, are students being transformed through a process of CE practice?

This research project is a qualitative study of student perceptions and experiences of CE at Rhodes. Through a survey questionnaire and a collection of interviews with students participating in the SVP, the study explores how CE is understood within this particular programme, what effects participation in this programme has on students, and what these student perceptions and experiences might contribute to understanding CE more broadly. Students attending RUCE training workshops, which are a prerequisite in order to be placed in an SVP, were invited to be a part of the study. Training workshops are provided by the RUCE office at the beginning of the academic year and again half way through the year for new volunteers who join the programme in the second semester of the year. At the start of the training workshops at the beginning of 2013, survey questionnaires were given out to students attending the volunteering workshops. Fifteen students responded to the questionnaire, which explored what they understood CE to be, their motivations for getting involved, and what they expected from the CE process. These responses provided valuable insight into their perceptions of CE prior to RUCE training and their work as volunteers.

Following the training workshops, an invitation to participate in this study was sent out to the entire group of volunteers, which consisted of around three hundred students. The first six students to respond to the invitation were accepted to participate. Of the six participants in this study, two of the students were international students, and only one of the participants was male. This is a fair representation of the group as a whole, as it should be noted that around twenty-five percent of Rhodes students are international, and a very small number, approximately twenty-two percent, of the CE volunteers each year are male.

The six participants were interviewed after one semester of participation in their chosen programme. These were in-depth semi-structured interviews that took place at a location chosen by the participants, and were approximately an hour long each. Toward the end of the academic year, all participants were sent transcripts of the first interview and invited to participate in a follow up interview if they felt they had anything to add, new experiences to share, or if their feelings on CE had changed since the first interview. Three of the six participants were interviewed a second time, and the same method was followed in this second round of interviews. Students participating in the interview process were given (or in some cases chose) pseudonyms, with the pseudonyms reflecting each student's personal demographics such as gender, cultural heritage and language.

Analysing the data

The questionnaires were given to students prior to the RUCE training in order to get a general sense of student understandings of CE, motivations for participation, and expectations of the programme. The survey responses reveal that students understand CE to be about making a contribution to a broader community and being provided an opportunity to access "hands on", practical experience (*Survey questionnaires*, 2013). Survey respondents indicated that they considered CE to involve giving something, but also gaining something. None of the responses expressed the view that volunteering was entirely altruistic, or self-serving. Keywords characterising anticipated gains included: "personal growth/development; learn; gain; to get; enrich; our education; experience; real life; find; discover; transition" (*Survey questionnaires*, 2013). Those keywords that represented contribution included: "give, help, make a difference, uplift, reach out, influence, assist, do good, impact" (*Survey questionnaires*, 2013). Some of the responses included phrases that reflected a more direct sense of reciprocity, such as "giving back, adds value to both partners, interact, share knowledge, pay it forward, sharing" (*Survey questionnaires*, 2013). An understanding of "exchange" rather than "transfer" is evident in student perceptions prior to SVP practice (Olowu, 2012:98). Whether or not students' expectations are met, and whether or not the above perceptions are CE outcomes requires analysis of CE in practice.

The surveys helped provide a sense of the key themes which could be used to guide the semi-structured interviews. The in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with students during their SVP tenure. These open-ended questions will assess student perceptions and experiences of the SVP, and whether students are transformed (personally and/or socially) through participation in the SVP. In order to obtain student narratives of their individual SVP experiences, open-ended questions explored the following areas:

- What (in general terms) do students understand CE to be in the university context;
- What do students understand the role of the university to be in relation to the community;
- Motivations for participation;
- Did the training workshops affect students' understanding of CE, or do they recall any moments or lessons that carry personal significance;
- What kind of reception did students experience at community partner sites;

- Memories of positive or negative experiences, highlights or frustrations;
- Did the SVP have an impact on a student's approach to their academic discipline;
- Feelings about overall experience and whether the experience would lead to further participation or withdrawal.

The student narratives will be organised according the objectives in the RUCE (2005h) mandate and will be analysed in relation to each other and the literature referred to in chapter 2. Emerging themes in the narratives themselves will be used to analyse the student contributions in order to establish synergies or differences between student perceptions and broader interpretations of what CE sets out do in the university context.

The students participating in this study

As mentioned above, in-depth interviews were conducted with six students. Before discussing the students' responses, a brief introduction to each student follows.

Sandile

Sandile is the only male participant in this study. From the outset, he and a few of his friends, also males, made an impression within the volunteer group and RUCE, as the group of men chose to participate in an early childhood learning SVP at a local school in Grahamstown. While men have always worked in this area, this group of volunteers specifically chose to work with younger children, a programme usually dominated by women from the university. As mentioned earlier, the SVP is not as closely linked to a student's field of study as are the service-learning or research based programmes. Sandile is an economics student which is far removed from early childhood education. While his SVP is not necessarily linked to his field of study, he explained that he recognised the need for social responsibility in any business enterprise. The SVP afforded him the opportunity to get hands on learning experience that could contribute to real world activities.

Buchi

Unlike Sandile, Buchi had participated in variety of forms of CE in different places. Buchi is a Nigerian woman, and much older than the other participants in this study. At the time of this study, Buchi was in South Africa as a postgraduate student in Journalism. In Nigeria, she had already established herself as a well-known radio personality and had decided to join

Rhodes to further her education. After having attended the training workshops, and having done a variety of engagement programmes elsewhere, Buchi took a particular interest in the shelter school for boys, a school for orphaned boys or those without adequate family or financial support. Not only did she want to contribute to the environment in which she was living while in Grahamstown, she had an interest in learning about different cultures and the space she occupied while living abroad, as well as getting to know new people in this new setting beyond the university community she was immediately introduced to upon arriving. Buchi participated in two programmes: as a mentor at the boys' shelter and as a mentor in a programme at a library. Having come from Nigeria, she could only communicate in English and not any of the other local languages. She expressed a sadness that so many children in school were not able to access adequate education and from her perspective, felt that English as a universal language had to be prioritised. She explained that she struggled to communicate within the programmes, as she could only speak English and that the English itself came with limitations due to context, or that it was a second or third language for some of the students she worked with. However, she also explained that on a human level, communication was possible despite language barriers.

Frida

When participating in this study, Frida was enrolled as a postgraduate student in Creative Writing. She viewed the SVP as a unique experience where students could be exposed to real world learning through the protected environment RUCE and the community partners provided. Frida (2013) explained that although she did not grow up in a privileged community, she recognised that she had certain privileges that could be shared or "paid forward". She explained that in the past when she was attending school in her own community, and then later when in the privileged space the university afforded her, she felt it was her duty to volunteer and contribute to the space she lived in. She said this was a "human duty" to share, give and participate in any environment in which a person finds themselves (Frida *interview 1*, 2013). She believes through participating in acts of kindness, people become kinder. She also explained that despite prescribed roles or expectations, benefits of engagement are bi-directional, so that despite age, status or positions of those within these engagement settings, the engagement itself leads to learning. She worked in a programme for high school students. Due to serious health issues, Frida had to leave her programme midyear, and expressed gratitude for the support the community partner gave her. She said that she was disappointed that she could not continue participating in the SVP.

Makasa

Makasa, originally from Zambia, was a postgraduate student in the English Literature and Politics at the time she was interviewed. She was no longer a part of the SVP when her interview was conducted, as she had completed her work at the community partner site, and was, by this time, working with the RUCE office in coordinating other volunteers participating in the SVP. Makasa felt that CE was an opportunity to both give and receive, and that participation in these programmes gave students a perspective of life outside of university life.

Anna

At the time of this study, Anna was a postgraduate student in Psychology. While she did not see working at a school with small children as having anything to do with her degree, she described volunteering as being far greater "therapy" than seeing a psychologist and wished that more people in the world did this kind of work. Anna (2013) had participated in CE volunteering at her previous university in Cape Town, and explained that comparing the two experiences was like comparing "apples and pears". She explained that there were far more student volunteers at the Cape Town university, which she described as far more organised, or took place with ease like "clockwork" (Anna *interview 1*, 2013). However, she added that the Rhodes experience was more intimate and more rewarding. Anna was overwhelmed by the often disorganised nature of volunteering in under resourced sites in Grahamstown, and for this reason, had left the SVP. She explained that while she loved the experience, would repeat the experience, and that it had been one of her most cherished experiences, the responsibility was too great at her particular site alongside a heavy postgraduate workload. Throughout interviews with Anna, she shared an awareness of her privilege in her society, both as a white female, and as part of a minority afforded the opportunity to gain a higher education. She recognised that entering the SVP site, she carried with her that privilege.

Thembi

At the time the interview took place, Thembi was in her final year as an undergraduate, completing her degree in Drama and Politics. She explained that in applied theatre, each

individual in the group has to bring something to the collaborative project, and cited a theorist who explored what it meant for actors to switch positions and roles, and to respond as if they were the other. She explained that this way of seeing something from another's perspective could relate to CE, and asked: "Are you sure your way is always the right way, and do you make legitimate attempts to think about things differently?" (Thembi *interview 1*, 2013). Thembi participated in the Arts and Drama in Education programme. While Thembi (2013) had left her programme and perceived the project to have failed, she said: "I am glad that I had this opportunity because that opportunity unveiled my eyes to why that [us and them binary] was inherently problematic".

Conclusion

The purpose and practice of the SVP at Rhodes University is shaped by the Grahamstown context. Therefore, the university, community partners and broader community have a stake in how the SVP operates, and its outcomes.

The next chapter will explore how CE is understood by the six students interviewed with particular reference to, and as a result of, SVP participation. This analysis will include what effects participation in this programme has on students, and whether SVP practice contributes to a sense of citizenship, community or social responsibility.

Chapter 4

A Practice of Community Engagement

Introduction

This study focuses on the practice of CE in the Rhodes University Student Volunteering Programme (SVP). The chapter explores two aspects relating to student perceptions of the SVP: what students understand by the term CE, and whether the practice of CE leads to transformation of students. Following a brief overview of the concepts citizenship and transformation, the chapter begins by contextualising volunteering. Thereafter, I outline participant responses in relation to the RUCE mandate and what exactly these students understand CE to entail in practice. This will include those students' personal experiences and shifts in action or perspectives as a result of their engagement. The chapter concludes by exploring what these kinds of transformations contribute to an understanding of CE at Rhodes, and elsewhere, and if students are better citizens as a result of SVP participation.

The purpose of this research project is to find out whether or not CE does indeed transform students into critical citizens as proposed in the CE literature already discussed. In order to understand the goals of the study, citizenship and transformation are framed as follows.

Citizenship

CE is often claimed to help make students into better citizens (Boyer, 1990; Kellogg Commission, 1999; DoE, 1997). Citizenship suggests the assurance of rights, as well as the acceptance of duties or responsibilities in relation to those rights. Scholarship that is attentive to these rights and duties would entail scholars who accepted that "society itself has a stake in how scholarship is defined" (Boyer, 1990:77). For Boyer, education is not merely about new knowledge production, but also about social integration. He writes:

> The aim of education is not only to prepare students for productive careers, but also to enable them to live lives of dignity and purpose; not only to generate new knowledge, but to channel that knowledge to humane ends; not merely to study government, but to help shape a citizenry that can promote the public good (Boyer, 1990:77-78).

Similarly, the Kellogg Commission argues that CE promotes a more holistic approach to education, one that advances a sense of citizenship. The first report produced by the Kellogg Commission states that through CE:

> This university will provide graduates with an education that fits them with the skills, attitudes, and values required for success in life, citizenship, and work or further education (1997:35).

The third report develops this idea, saying:

> Engagement in the form of service learning, outreach, and university community partnerships can help address [societal] problems. And it can also put the university to work on the practical problems of the day. In this endeavour everyone benefits, and students stand to gain the most. Close partnerships with the surrounding community help demonstrate that higher education is about important values such as informed citizenship and a sense of responsibility. The newer forms of public scholarship and community-based learning help produce civic-minded graduates who are as well prepared to take up the complex problems of our society as they are to succeed in their careers (1999:13).

Through facilitation of CE by the university, or university-community exchange programmes, engagement is negotiated with external community partners so that both sides of the partnership have something to gain and something to contribute. It is also through CE that individuals should experience a greater sense of citizenship with a greater sense of civic duty, a transformation central to this study.

Transformation

Personal transformation may be understood as a change in the way a person feels about his or herself, which may lead to a shift in how that person relates to their environment. Social transformation differs in that a shift in the environment influences the mindset of an individual or group leading to reform or transformation (Kelly, G, 2006; Williams, M, 1963). Thus, a shift in collective consciousness takes place and creates transformation of the social order and collective understanding. Personal transformation has the potential to lead to social transformation. CE policy (DoE, 1997) is a HE response to the call for national transformation post-1994. This study looks for evidence of shifts in consciousness – personal transformation – relative to CE policy and the RUCE objectives. Through the practice of CE, this study asks if students are transformed through volunteering as envisioned in the national CE policy.

While it is difficult to define what exactly a “good citizen” is and to identify when exactly “transformation” has taken place, participant responses in relation to CE objectives will

reveal whether a sense of civic responsibility, critical awareness and transformation occurs as a result of SVP participation. Therefore, the contributions in Chapter 2, the South African 1997 White paper objectives, as well as the RUCE mandate discussed in Chapter 3 will be used as the benchmark to assess development of a sense of citizenship or civic responsibility. These goals will be used to interpret whether participants in this study are transformed as a result of the Rhodes SVP, which ought to "prepare students for lives of dignity and purpose" (Boyer, 1990) as "civic minded graduates" (Kellogg, 1999).

Contextualising volunteering

Volunteering is about sharing one's time, resources or expertise. While there may be something to gain in return, the emphasis is on giving. Rather than seeking benefits, we imagine a volunteer to feel a sense of duty or responsibility to the environment or society in which he or she lives, and a responsibility to give back to their society. We thus think of a volunteer as one who gives rather than one who receives. However, RUCE understands volunteering as a mutually beneficial exchange (RUCE, 2014f:17). While the students participating in the SVP may not learn something directly related to their academic discipline, they can benefit through learning about the socio-economic conditions of the environments in which their disciplines are practiced. Therefore, the students are not only benefactors, but also beneficiaries within university-community partnerships.

Boyer argues that the work of the university is enriched through CE and the Gibbons thesis emphasises that students may learn through opportunities of application provided by the community (Boyer, 1990; Gibbons et al., 1994). With these clear benefits to the university and to individual students in mind, there are two aspects to note in the particular case of the SVP at Rhodes. Firstly, volunteering, by nature, is not prescribed and is not necessarily directly linked to a student's field of study, unlike other forms of CE such as service learning or engaged research. Therefore, benefits with regard to the academic interests of a student are not necessarily immediately visible. Secondly, due to the context of Grahamstown and the stark inequality between the university and broader community, the vulnerability of that community makes it harder to imagine students as beneficiaries in their volunteering relationships. This raises questions as to how, in the case of this study, students understand the purpose of the SVP and why they choose to become involved.

The RUCE mandate

This section discusses participants' experiences of CE through the SVP. The four objectives of CE listed in the RUCE mandate will be used as a guide in order to explore participant perceptions and SVP outcomes. The RUCE (2012b:9-10) objectives, first introduced in the 2005 Rhodes CE policy document, are as follows:

- Making available the university's expertise, resources and facilities where appropriate;
- Acknowledging and being sensitive to the problems created by the legacy of apartheid and ensuring that appropriate corrective measures are employed to address past imbalances;
- Developing shared values that embrace basic human and civil rights;
- Producing critical, capable and balanced graduates who are aware of their social responsibilities.

Participants' experiences in relation to these objectives guide the discussion of whether and how the SVP might contribute to graduating critically aware and socially responsive students as citizens within their society.

"Making available the university's expertise, resources and facilities where appropriate".

As noted in the work of Boyer (1990), the university ought to contribute toward addressing some of society's most pressing issues, and the work of the university is enriched through contact with the broader community. The RUCE (2012b:10) mandate, a response to the national CE policy, states that it is the university's responsibility to make available *expertise, resources* and *facilities* where *appropriate*. This highlights the national need for privileged communities, such as HEIs, to assist in the transformation of society in response to the need for redress, redistribution and development. Through engagement, the university will derive its own benefits.

Expertise, resources or facilities –what kind of service might the SVP contribute?

There are a variety of ways in which Rhodes University makes expertise, resources and facilities available to the broader Grahamstown community. These include the resources

which the university contributes to the support of the CE office, including training and transport of student volunteers. Participants commented on some of the ways in which this sharing of resources takes place through the SVP, whether with regard to material or human capital. One of the participants, Sandile (2013), worked with a primary school, which entailed assisting the teachers in educating children through extra classes; and in extramural activities, such as sports training. Sandile shared what he had contributed to the primary school, both in terms of intellectual or strategic input, and through resources he had available to him on campus:

> What I initially said to them - there's 56 children - so if we take all of them one hour a week, they normally cannot accomplish anything because they are just going to play. So I said to the principal, *would you allow it and what do you think? How about we take ten students which are going to go to grade one next year and we try help them, but according to your curriculum, or their curriculum? They do a different topic like times tables and what not.* And she actually loved that idea. She gives us a topic each week beforehand so that I can go on the internet and get a few things that we could do and I would run it past her. And she also agrees or sometimes disagrees. And then we take that and we actually help them with drawing and all those things every week on a particular day. And she actually likes it so much that sometimes she'll take some of the things I am doing and do it with all 56 of them. We'll be doing a little bit of research, we'll go on the internet and what not. And then look at books, which every child who does not know, we help them. We also encourage them to read their books at night before they go to bed and we can actually see the progress. It's actually coming along very well, so we are happy with everything (Sandile *interview 1*, 2013).

In this example, activities in which volunteers participate are negotiated by both the university community and the community stakeholders. Sandile's access to university facilities provided him with the opportunity to make a contribution at his community partner site. However, in view of other participants, and examples of the ways in which they contribute, it is often less about material or intellectual contributions that the SVP offers. Material contributions are not always necessarily what community partners require. For instance, through participation in the SVP, Anna explained that she realised that what she would be contributing in her programme, also involving a primary school, was less about material or intellectual contributions. Rather, a volunteer's time and a physical presence were of more importance. Through SVP exposure to a community site, Anna commented:

> I felt like I had this grandiose idea of what I could contribute in a huge way immediately, kind of an expectation I had. Then when we actually started here with the community programme, I realised that I couldn't jump in immediately and start saving children. The expectation I had, I was hoping to make a measurable difference immediately and I realised that's actually not the case. Now I just get more enjoyment I realise, especially for the kids, us being there it's something different for them. And besides the academic work, I think they just enjoy having something different happen in their day. My expectation had to go from I am going to make a profound difference in this child's life to I am just going to have fun and be with them in this moment. That was, in my mind, quite a step down from my expectation, but a better one in the end (Anna *interview 1*, 2013).

While Sandile was able to take initiative and contribute more than what was expected, Anna's experience required that she reconsider her initial expectations and adapt to what was needed by the community partner, as well as what was feasible in the community context.

Like Anna (2013) who explained that "just being there" was important, Buchi (2013) explained the importance of "just play". She said:

> We ran around with them, we sang with them, we'd chase each other around the fields or around the buildings. We shared biscuits and water or juice if we had, or on another day we watched movies with them at night. And essentially you could look at it as:*what's that, it's just running around with some young children and that's your idea of volunteering?* We are deficient in certain ways and we are empowered in certain ways. These children to me needed care. They needed warmth from other people. They have parents. They have siblings. It meant a lot to the kids we worked with there to find that people from various places, whether having their skin colours or not, were taking time to come and eat with them, to run around with them, not necessarily because they wanted anything from them. That was new to me, because that's play. We just went to play with the kids, nothing serious, maybe to draw some caricatures with them, and then help them make some things or what not, that's just play. But it was exhilarating for me to just play (Buchi *interview 1*, 2013).

Anna and Buchi's contributions denote that transfers of university resources may not be restricted to knowledge or material transfer. The volunteers themselves are a social resource afforded to the community through the SVP. While CE has particular objectives, the context will shape CE practices. To an extent, Anna and Buchi's experience of the SVP provide a response to Pienaar-Steyn's (2014) concern that because of the broad scope in which CE operates, it is difficult to identify what is and is not considered CE. In her

contribution to the literature on CE in South Africa, Pienaar-Steyn (2012:41) argues that the difficulty in defining contributions results in arbitrary actions in order to "tick boxes" on "performance contracts". The student participants in this study reveal that despite anticipated SVP roles, contributions and gains, that engagement itself within a particular context shapes practices and outcomes. Therefore, university-community stakeholders themselves shape CE in each instance of its practice, or as Nongxa (2010:65) had argued, we need to look at what is already being done in practice. Participant responses reveal that regardless of the form of resource, intellectual or social, a contribution takes place.

Participants reveal that there may be unexpected benefits resulting from SVP interaction. As Buchi (2013) explains, in the South African context, with so many official languages and a poor education system, exposure to English was an important contribution volunteers could make to the community partner sites. She explained:

> It was an eye opener for me, to see that it is possible for kids to not speak English in the present day world. And in modern day Africa, in contemporary day Africa, that is sad. And you know that is the reality, and it's not peculiar to South Africa. It's happening in my country [Nigeria] as well (Buchi *interview 1*, 2013).

The participants explained that as volunteers, they provided teaching assistance, emotional and physical support and exposure to something different in the daily routines of those community partners with whom they engaged. As a result, the experience was "exhilarating", empowering, more rewarding than anticipated, "an eye opener" (Anna *interview 1*, 2013; Buchi *interview 1*, 2013; Sandile *interview 1*, 2013).

In its simplest form, CE is a bi-directional transfer of resources. While the university is making resources available to a broader community, the respondents show that the community also makes resources available to the university. As explained in Chapter 3, the RUCE policy does not attempt to contain a CE practice within prescriptive definitions. The mandate and a "best practice" approach allows experience to guide practice, and practice to provide experience. The benefit of the non-prescriptive approach is evident in the richness of the experiences related by the respondents. Anna speaks to the complexity of CE when she says:

> I can't quite put my finger on it, on what Community Engagement is. I know how it feels, what it entails, but to define it is a different thing. ... I think that volunteering, the word brings up the idea that it is all yourself initiated, giving. And I think, for me, I think

> volunteering is so much more than just putting in a few hours in a day.... It is just that I don't feel like the word volunteering, it doesn't sort of quite capture what is going on in these places. In the school that I was at, I felt like I wasn't a volunteer. I was like a physical helper, some days I was like an emotional helper, sometimes I was like a volunteer. I think that helper and volunteer are interchangeable (Anna *interview 1*, 2013).

Despite her difficulty in articulating CE as a concept, it is through engagement with a community, that Anna finds meaning, or as she says, "I know how it feels, what it entails". This would be, as Barnett (2004:251) suggests, Mode 3 knowledge, which is "a knowing-in-and-with-uncertainty". Anna argues that the CE terminology used has its limitations, and that it is the purpose behind engagement and those that participate that give the term meaning. Anna explains:

> On a personal level, the word volunteering used to make me think of one person giving to another, and it sounds very clichéd, but the way I understand it now is it is a two-way street. You're going out and giving something, but then you get something back. So I feel like the word volunteering doesn't quite do what the programme is justice (Anna *interview 2*, 2013).

Anna's reflections demonstrate the difficulty in articulating what should be understood about the SVP – so while she argues that "volunteer" and "helper" are interchangeable terms, the terms, for her, do not quite capture her sense that it is also reciprocal. For Anna (2013), practice refined her understanding of CE, and she says: "CE is simple", a "two-way street" between the university and community. This is because in practice, the volunteers realise they are both benefactor and beneficiary.

Ensuring that the exchange or transfer is appropriate

As participants recognised that CE as a process was reciprocal in nature, the contributions being made by volunteers did not merely entail a transferral of resources. This highlights that making resources available "where appropriate" is a necessary consideration in order to avoid benefactor-beneficiary relations, as well as to mitigate potential risk on either side of the partnership (RUCE, 2012b:10). The need for contributions to be appropriate was made evident in participants' SVP experiences. For instance, Thembi questioned whether the programme she was participating in was contributing to, or detracting from the community. She says:

> I had some really great relationships with some of those kids, and actually sometimes when I am walking down town we chat with some of them. But for them I think they would have

> preferred us not to have come back or to have come at all. Because there is nothing that we added to their lives. If anything, they had to manoeuvre their own lives around us, there was nothing of value that we brought to them. They could do it all on their own anyway, so what was the point? When you get involved in CE, you go into a space, and if you add no value, is that not too big a risk? (Thembi *interview 1*, 2013).

It is clear that although some students understood CE to involve reciprocal exchange, others, like Thembi, question whether community partners, who are generally perceived to be beneficiaries in university-community relations, do indeed receive benefits. Thembi's concerns suggest that study of community partner perspectives of CE is warranted. Thembi expresses the view that her SVP failed in the transfer of resources, as the community partner were better able to fulfil the tasks without assistance.

Buchi raised another issue in relation to the appropriateness of sharing certain resources. She spoke of the difficulties she faced in negotiating resources in CE relations. According to Buchi (2013), the group of shelter boys she worked with wanted to go to "Spur [a restaurant in town] and eat burgers". She explained that while this seemed insignificant, not having access to a place that so many others did was a mark of the everyday disparities experienced in South Africa, and that this simple activity was something that the boys truly desired, that it was their "dream" to go. She felt she could relate to what it was that they wanted to experience, and wanted to contribute to making that particular experience possible. According to the SVP mandate, this was not a possibility for two main reasons. Firstly, providing financial aid or gifts, and especially food outside of a food aid programme, is considered to perpetuate benefactor-beneficiary divisions. Secondly, RUCE relies on donor support and cannot afford to take on additional financial expenses. Furthermore, Buchi said that although she could personally afford to take the boys for burgers, she understood the necessity for these kinds of policies. She explained that while she was able to contribute financially, other volunteers at the community site could not, and she would not risk "creating bad blood" (Buchi *interview 1*, 2013).

Concerning the sharing of resources where exchanges and interactions are perceived as "appropriate", two different views of the role of students in the SVP are presented by participants. As has been discussed, Sandile shows that the facilities at Rhodes can be used to contribute to volunteering sites, and provides an example of how Rhodes resources were used to produce additional teaching aids. Others argue it is *being there*, the volunteer's presence and care, as well as the exposure to different cultures, language and the

opportunity to interact with others outside of an immediate social group that those students provide, which is important. It could be argued that a sense of community is established as a result of CE, as all six of the participants spoke about the opportunity and reward in "building relationships" at community partner sites. In many cases, students felt it is "the extra pair of hands" that volunteers contribute (Sandile *interview 2*, 2013). What becomes clear is that what is needed in responding to those issues is context specific. Therefore, the sharing of expertise, resources and infrastructure may take place in a more rudimentary form than initially anticipated by students.

The "volunteer" or "helper" is a resource that the university makes available to a broader community. A student's personal time, the engagement, is a part of the contribution the university is making available to a community through the SVP, through engagement, through social activity. Exposure to the community is equally, if not more so, beneficial to the students. In this sense, perhaps it is how divisions are broken down to create a sense of community, or even merely a familiarity, that allows corrective measures to take place that address past imbalances. From this perspective, making university resources available to a broader community is linked to another objective of the RUCE (2012b:9) mandate: "being sensitive to the problems created by the legacy of apartheid".

"Acknowledging and being sensitive to the problems created by the legacy of apartheid and ensuring that appropriate corrective measures are employed to address past imbalances".

As discussed earlier, Boyer (1990) argues that CE is one way in which the university might address pressing issues in society. The Kellogg Commission (1999:13), which is a student-centred approach to CE comments on this broader objective, and states: "Close partnerships with the surrounding community help demonstrate that higher education is about important values such as informed citizenship and a sense of responsibility". Both contributions resonate with the post-1994 South African approach to CE. The CE national policy states that HEIs have a role to play in society in response to particular needs at a broader national level. A part of this process, in the South African context, is redress of past imbalances as noted in this RUCE (2012b:9) objective. The RUCE mandate focuses on the university's responsibility in the South African context, and more specifically, within the immediate Grahamstown community. This is because of the stark contrast between the resources of HEIs, and their broader communities.

A student's motivation for getting involved in CE is an important aspect to the question of whether or not students are transformed through a process of SVP participation, and this is because motivation underpins a student's expectations, and perhaps their assumptions. All six of the students interviewed for this project had joined the SVP as a means to contribute in some way to society. For example, one of the participants, Sandile explained: "I wanted to give a helping hand" (Sandile *interview 2*, 2013), while another, Frida, argued: "It's about justice in my opinion, it's about your basic duty on this earth... I mean, who are you to take these opportunities and these privileges and not share them with your fellow human beings" (Frida *interview 1*, 2013).

Some of the students' approaches to the SVP reflected a sense that CE is a necessary response to the divisions around them, aligned with this RUCE objective. Frida, for example, discussed how a sense of citizenship is needed to balance inequality. Social responsibility, in this case, is using existing privilege for social good or redress. She explains:

> [CE is] vital, because you are looking at a highly privileged community like the university. I mean we've got access here to unbelievably amazing resources that most people would never dream of accessing. I think that in Grahamstown especially, I mean, we've spoken about this often, the sort of animosity between a lot of the Grahamstown community and the more privileged university students. I mean, it's unbelievably ironic that outside our gates, you step through the clock tower arch [main entrance to the university] and there are street kids begging, and you wonder, here are street kids playing under the arch and everything, these street kids, will they ever pass through that arch as a student? And you want that because it's just time to step out of this, real ivory tower that we are in and you think to yourself: '*why should I have this and not you*'. So I think that community engagement is absolutely vital and necessary. And if it were up to me, I would order the whole university to do something. Yeah, it's a way of breaking down that ivory tower and making these opportunities equal and sharing resources, as opposed to holding on to them (Frida *interview 1*, 2013)

Anna shares a similar perspective to Frida when she comments on the way volunteering can contribute to addressing inherited deficits and social divisions. Anna says:

> My Mom trots out this phrase "white guilt" which is terrible, but I suppose there is some truth in it - I kind of felt so privileged growing up and felt so lucky to have what I have that I almost feel like it's my duty. Duty is the wrong word. But I feel like it's my responsibility to give back in whatever way I can. Sometimes I sort of feel, *how am I making a difference at all?* The reason why I joined was because I think it so important to do this. Volunteering has

> opened up my eyes far more than studying has - seeing a different side of life, really, from my own (Anna *interview 1*, 2013).

In relation to the SVP as a means to address past imbalances, and in response to a present context of inequality, Anna adds:

> Volunteering is something that I have always felt that people should do, or if you're that way inclined you should do. You should try your best to help people where you can. Especially for me, as I got older, and I suppose you kind of see the world. I got to see where I am in South Africa and to be in a position growing up with privilege. That fed a lot of my motivation to extend a hand to kids that didn't have that and give them something like that (Anna *interview 1*, 2013).

While a desire to respond appropriately to the inequalities they saw around them was a key motivating factor for joining the SVP, the participants' comments make it clear that through the SVP, they become more intimately aware of the existing disparities, and therefore that their involvement in the SVP led to a change in consciousness. With reference to her experience in the SVP, Makasa says:

> It's true because if I sit on campus, and you're talking with your friends, you'll talk about shoes, and what you going to buy and what you're going to drink that night and oh god, I've got so much work to do and I have an essay due and I have this and I have that. And at no point do you stop to think beyond that. And then you engage with different people and it's a completely different mindset, because what your priorities are at that moment aren't what their priorities are. And it provides you with a little bit of a chance for you to rethink what you're doing with your life. And also, it's a very big, it's a little bit like a rude awakening because before Rhodes, I was in this tiny little bubble and things I wanted I got from my parents, end of story, no question (Makasa *interview 1*, 2013).

Makasa's feeling is that through exposure, volunteers experience increased sensitivity to their environment, and perhaps, people or communities different to their own. It is apparent that the interaction or engagement with others at community partner sites, and insight into different ways of life, through SVP participation, contributed to Makasa gaining perspective on her personal position in the world, but more importantly, through increased sensitivity, she was made aware of a world outside of her own experience.

While work through a SVP is less likely to have a direct link to a student's academic discipline than other forms of CE, in view of the RUCE approach to the SVP, volunteering

does provide students with a more holistic approach to learning as claimed by the Kellogg Commission. It is, however, the South African context that informs the way in which CE is interpreted and practiced. As RUCE (2014f:16) posits: "There are no quick fixes to social transformation; however, volunteering is one way in which students can play a vital role by participating in community support interventions", but this is not without recognising inherent reciprocity. This reciprocity is evident when RUCE (2014f:16) adds, "by volunteering time, skills and creative energy, students can make a difference *in their lives* and the lives of others", an understanding shared and expressed by the respondents as a result of their SVP participation.

As discussed in Chapter 2, CE as a term is articulated and defined in a number of ways within HE literature and policies such as a service, a philosophy, a form of social justice, or active citizenship. Participants explained that they had joined the SVP because they thought they had something to give to a broader community, and because they imagined that they might gain something as well. However, it should be noted that one student, Thembi, expressed a contrary view arguing that because she felt there was an unequal power dynamic between the university and a broader community, whereby those from the university often assume a position of superiority, the goals of CE are not likely to be reached. As a result, a sense of "partnership" or mutually beneficial "exchange" is not, in her view, possible through CE (Thembi *interview1*, 2013). The other participants were more hopeful. They expressed a sense that as members of the university, they were in a privileged position and therefore, had a duty to contribute to their broader community. Some students emphasised that they felt a responsibility to contribute to their environments, rather than merely consuming resources. These motivations may be understood to reflect upon conceptions of citizenship, and are consistent with this RUCE objective for the SVP to be a means to contribute to transformation and redress of past imbalances.

"Developing shared values that embrace basic human and civil rights".

In the above two RUCE objectives, it is a sense of citizenship and recognition of inherent disparities in the South African context that promotes the making of university resources available to the broader community. There is already a sense that students are aware of the apartheid legacy and the need for corrective measures. However, we also need to find out to what extent a student's experience of volunteering help them develop values that will make them better citizens. For this reason, in view of this objective to *develop shared*

values, which *embrace basic human and civil rights*, this section will first discuss the ways in which RUCE training is intended to develop shared values by preparing students for their SVP participation, and making them aware of the position they assume in a bi-directional and mutually-beneficial partnership. In the second part, the way in which exposure to the community may develop shared values or impact student perceptions, and the question of whether that might lead to transformation will be discussed.

Value systems to prepare students for responsible CE

The training workshops offered by RUCE are intended to prepare students so that they know what to expect and what is expected of them before joining the community partners. This is an attempt to mitigate the risk of perpetuating skewed power relations in university-community interactions. In February 2013, these workshops included testimonies from Rhodes academics recognised for their CE work, who were invited to share some of their experiences and lessons learned. Staff from the RUCE office, as well as community partners and leaders also provided guidance to students based on their CE experience. In addition, the large group of student volunteers (+-300) were divided into smaller groups to workshop key CE ideas and concepts and to discuss some of the practicalities related to volunteering. There were three main elements to these workshops:

- a discussion of the RUCE asset-based approach that focuses on existing community partner assets, which are then matched to the appropriate Rhodes assets in order to build on existing assets;
- the RUCE “do(s) and don’t(s)”;
- exploring diversity and privilege, which involves group sharing and reflection on difference, both in the student volunteer community, as well as in relation to their broader communities.

The participants in this study were asked what they remembered about the training workshops at the beginning of the academic year, which took place at least one academic semester prior to the interviews. Buchi shared that through the training, her perception of volunteering shifted in that students were encouraged to understand and recognise what the community partners offered students, rather than focusing on what students would be contributing to the community. She said:

> During the training there was something that struck a chord with me, about going to the site not thinking that you will do all the giving, and thinking that you are the superior one, who is coming from Rhodes, with all these resources at your disposal, and you're going to this site thinking, oh, I'm just going to give to them. You should go with the mind that they also have something to give you (Buchi *interview 1*, 2013).

RUCE training is about the transformation of student expectations of CE in order to sensitise students to the benefits and responsibilities relating to their role in CE, as well as to mitigate the risk of community disruption. Buchi continues:

> And, also, yeah I remember now, [as part of the training we were also told] not to get depressed or disappointed [if] your support, or where you've chosen to help within the community does not experience a "big bang" - you're just doing the little that you can do. And if we all do the little we can do, it all adds up to something at the end of the day. It's not going to the site thinking, or going into community engagement thinking I am going to change the world. The truth is, you can't change the world in that corner, you can only do the best that you can do, and when we all do our little bit, they add up to the big change we want (Buchi *interview 1*, 2013).

Thus, through SVP training workshops, RUCE attempts to protect students from creating unrealistic expectations before entering community sites based on negotiated objectives of university and community partners. Buchi's comments emphasise two distinct factors presented in the RUCE training, which contribute to transformation or shifts in students perceptions concerning their roles as volunteers. Firstly, transforming expectations is about breaking down university or student hubris as benefactors in university-community relations. Secondly, the training emphasises that in CE success is based on relational exchange where collective success is valued over individual success, or what in South Africa, might be referred to as Ubuntu. Arguably, this is counter to the academic project which encourages individual effort and reward. As Boyer (1990) argues, it is important for a university to be immersed in the material and social conditions of their context in order to be relevant contributors to society. The university's focus on research and teaching, its promotion and reward systems, and its values have been called into question by its public. Thus, there is something about the university's methods, or ways of interacting with the public that leaves a gap that CE can mediate – an awareness of and appreciation for the necessary other.

Emphasising the need to avoid unequal power relations and the importance of mutually beneficial exchange, Buchi adds:

> [The main thing I learnt was] that you're not in a superior position all the time. And when you get to the site, you do not see yourself as the only one who's got good to give. They also have something to give. And you must position yourself to receive as well. So then it's a two-way thing, you give and you receive. And also that you do not expect to change the world and that there's the "big bang", or get depressed or that in three months you give up and think so what, nothing has happened. It might seem that nothing has happened, but you've contributed your piece, your bit (Buchi *interview 1*, 2013).

The aim to encourage bi-directional CE is evident in the training offered by RUCE. This CE strategy mirrors Boyer's approach to university-community relations as reciprocal (Boyer, 1990; 1996). Contributing "your bit" requires that students understand their role, and understand them in relation to the environment in which they are working.

In the training workshop, Frida explained that students were given group work where they were able to discuss a variety of scenarios. Through role play and the analysis of different positions participants occupy in the SVP, the volunteers were able to work through possible solutions to potential problems. This gave students an idea of what to expect, what kind of support was available and how students might approach potential problems that arise. Again, this provided students with an opportunity to engage with positions and perspectives different to their own.

In addition to practical training, Frida explained that it was the RUCE's overall message to students that had the biggest impact. She explained that RUCE shows volunteers:

> That you are not there to save anyone, you're not there to go and be all prim and proper and say oh, '*look at you poor soul, I'm here to help you*', that is an idiotic, naive and frankly a very arrogant way of looking at it.... especially when a lot of students are doing this kind of work for the first time (Frida *interview 1*, 2013).

Makasa, reflecting on the training related a similar message. She said:

> We shouldn't think of it [community engagement] as charity and we shouldn't think of ourselves as having the answers to these people's problems. Anything we engage in should be a partnership. And that's something I've never thought of. I've always thought of community engagement as charity (Makasa *interview 1*, 2013).

These responses suggest that the RUCE workshops did assist in getting students to recognise the complexity of existing town-gown divisions, and the need for humility, not hubris in university-community relations.

While five of the six participants commented on the way in which the training prior to participation had shifted their perceptions concerning their motivations for, and expectations of SVP participation, Anna shared a different experience. Anna questioned the lack of preparation for the "hands on" aspects of volunteering. She says, "in the workshop we talked about, '*what is your role*', we constantly talked about '*what is your role*', but at the end of the weekend I still had no idea what my role was" (Anna *interview 1*, 2013). While the RUCE approach may have enhanced consciousness and sensitivity of the students, inadequate attention to practical aspects may have detracted from efficacy. As noted by Sandile (2013), learning what his role entailed at the partner site had been a positive experience. Anna's (2013) experience differed, as she explains, "I felt like I was stumbling blindly into the community, into my actual group". Upon arrival at her SVP site, Anna became aware of how under-resourced the school was. Therefore, in comparing student experiences, each partner site will have its own unique context, and as a result, preparing students for their roles will have its limitations, through RUCE, and at community partner sites. Interestingly, Anna explained that in retrospect, the RUCE message resonated with her experience of CE. What Anna realised as a result of SVP practice had been taught in the training, but was only really consolidated in her mind after practical experience. This specific aspect of the training foreshadows, even if with limitations, what students might expect, that being what Barnett (2004) refers to as *learning for an unknown future*.

For some students, recognising that the most critical need is that of breaking down town-gown divisions from the outset; as well preconceptions about what it is the community partner needs or what is that students might contribute, is a transformation that takes place prior to participation. For others, this learning took place during participation. Anna's personal frustrations at the site made her more aware of the community partner position: "I am finding now – I'm enjoying it now, because I work... I have got so much respect for the principal; she deserves a medal for doing what she does" (Anna interview 1, 2013). This is as Barnett (2004:254) suggests: "one goes forward not because one has either knowledge or skills but because one has a self that is adequate to such an uncertain world... [a] being [that] has a will to go on". Therefore, preparing students is an important aspect of their volunteering

process, but it requires that actual engagement take place to become meaningful, the necessary process suggested by Gibbons et al., the Kellogg Commission, Barnett and Boyer.

There is evidence in the participants' responses that the RUCE approach contributes to students being aware of, or sensitive to the unfamiliar environments they would enter through their chosen SVP. The effect on students included an appreciation of what the community partners make available to students. While preparing students to be responsible is important before they arrive at community sites, there are two sides to the partnership, which requires shared values that shape transformative outcomes.

Developing shared values through responsible CE

According to the Kellogg Commission (1999:9):

> Embedded in the engagement ideal is a commitment to sharing and reciprocity. By engagement the Commission envisions partnerships, two-way streets defined by mutual respect among the partners for what each brings to the table.

As Boyer (1990) explains, this two-way exchange entails making university resources available in a way that enriches scholarship and makes the work of the university relevant. The desired outcomes require what Gibbons et al. (1994:3) refer to as "methodologies that are interactive and socially distributed". The SVP is one way in which to initiate university-community relationships. RUCE (2014) states:

> Volunteering provides students with the soft skills that they need in order to be prepared for their work and social environments... Equally important is the development of Community Partners so that they are able to make effective use of the volunteers.

Thus, the SVP is intended to be a mutually-beneficial exchange. While shared values may differ from one programme to another, the most important value that ought to underpin engagement is that of mutual respect.

Due to the disparities in the Grahamstown community those participating in CE are vulnerable to skewed perceptions of what each side of the partnership has to offer, affecting the success of intended outcomes.

Initially, as students are introduced to community partners, the RUCE staff attempt to sensitise students to the new spaces they are about to enter. In many instances, this new-found sensitivity in students is a result of recognition that the students themselves are often in

a privileged position, even if only in the context of the university of which they are a part. However, this sensitivity cannot necessarily be limited to a personal feeling of being in a privileged position over those they engage with. This sensitivity is also a response to an acknowledgement that they are being invited into spaces that they might not ordinarily have access to. The RUCE training is the first step in order to develop shared values so that a CE partnership may be possible. However, it is the engagement in practice that will successfully *develop shared values*, which *embrace basic human and civil rights* that influences transformation as envisioned in the RUCE mandate, or fail to do so.

Following training and at least one semester of the SVP in practice, students had a better understanding of what CE entails, their personal benefits, and the possible benefits for community stakeholders. Speaking to what he had gained from the SVP, Sandile said:

> I have learnt a lot. That we are different in our upbringing. We are different and people come from different perspectives and see things differently. You cannot just look at it your way.... Not everybody has the same opportunities, there's a lack of opportunity. I think that is what CE opens your eyes to being there - you see that you are part of a bigger thing than you, and you see the opportunities they don't have, which is one of the big things that has helped me as well (Sandile *interview 1*, 2013).

Sandile's "eyes were opened" as he became more sensitive to the community context. Students are provided access to new environments, but also afforded the opportunity to assert themselves in an unfamiliar context. Their experiences may or may not meet the expectations they set for themselves, and the difference between actual and anticipated outcomes is where the learning takes place. According to Sandile:

> Before I came here, and in high school, it [community engagement] was more of a service kind of thing, where you go and do things for someone and then you leave, and then go again, and then you leave. But then at Rhodes, it works differently. They give you the responsibility of going out there and then starting something which you will, or that each student can continue with in the future (Sandile *interview 1*, 2013).

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Sandile was able to implement new processes he had suggested to the community partner, which the community partner felt complemented their programme. Providing students with the opportunity to learn beyond the classroom in a more challenging environment provides a more holistic education as advocated by the Kellogg Commission (1997; 1999). Sandile's personal empowerment and the responsibility bestowed

on him by the community partner cultivated a greater respect and sensitivity toward the responsibilities and knowledge of the community partner.

As a student leader in the SVP, he noted an "embarrassing" moment and recalls the community partner as saying: "we appreciate these [new students] and their excitement, but there is a way we do things, so please just get the students together and talk to them" (Sandile *interview 2*, 2013). Sandile emphasised the importance of community leadership in CE projects, commenting that as part of the Rhodes SVP:

> [The community] can manage programmes, they can improve it, they can keep it the way they want to keep it, instead of us just going there and doing the service then coming back... when you go out there, you should never try and cultivate your own ideas in such a way, but even though you do sometimes, you should never impose them. You hear what they want you to do – the community – because, the project, they are going to stay with the project. You are going to leave (Sandile *interview 1*, 2013).

Sandile emphasises the importance of following the community partner's lead, but because he understands that he has something to contribute, he is afforded security, confidence or a sense of equality in the partnership. Respect for and appreciation of the experience and wisdom of community partners is developed. Exposure and successful CE outcomes leads to greater propensity for shared values between stakeholders.

The awareness Sandile developed as a result of his volunteering experience was also a feature of other students' SVP experience. For example, Makasa describes how it was the community leader in her chosen programme that changed the way she thinks about CE. According to Makasa (2013), "what the woman there taught us was that what these kids want from you is not money, it's interaction. Because a lot of them don't have anyone to go back to at the end of the day". This disruption of her assumptions made Makasa more aware of perspectives and positions different to her own. She continues:

> You stop thinking of these people as a problem, and that is basically what charity is, it's like shame, let me give money to this cause. But in looking at it as a partnership, you're going into it to form partnerships. Your goal is to form relationships with these people, and gives you an element, it gives you things you wouldn't experience out of that situation (Makasa *interview 1*, 2013).

As discussed in Chapter 2, Kenn (2011) argues that the wisdom community stakeholders contribute "exceeds" that of university partners, despite the university having more educational resources available to them. Both Makasa and Sandile related an appreciation for the leadership of their community partner, which contributed to successful CE outcomes. It was evident that they developed an awareness of their own rights and responsibilities, confidence in themselves and their community partners, and appreciation for the challenges experienced by communities.

The SVP exposed students to new power dynamics and understandings of agency. Through exposure, students came to better understand the complicated power dynamics operating in their context. Both RUCE and community partners were responsible for having an impact on student perceptions of their rights, and the rights of those they interacted with, *developing shared values that embrace basic human and civil rights*.

"Producing critical, capable and balanced graduates who are aware of their social responsibilities".

The goals of CE in the White Paper are articulated as a platform through which HEIs develop "social responsibility and awareness among students" around social and economic concerns through "community service programmes" (DoE: 1997). As suggested by Gibbons et al. (1994:3), rather than being disciplinary and hierarchical, the Mode 2 knowledge approach is problem orientated and application-based; it is team-driven and multi-sited; it is partnership-based and socially useful; as well as mediated, reflexive and responsive. Furthermore, it is argued that this form of knowledge production is more socially accountable and collaborative in relation to problems identified in localised contexts (Gibbons et al., 1994:3). Aligned with the application-based approach, the Kellogg Commission makes recommendations for achieving a more holistic approach, which connects "discovery and learning by providing more opportunities for hands-on learning" (1997:ix). Following SVP practice, which is aligned with the above CE objectives, the participants in this study shared personal shifts in their outlook as a result of their SVP experience.

Does awareness or exposure produce critical graduates?

The students' reflections show that CE exposed them to different ways of life that transported them outside of their own positions in society. Participants expressed that if it were not for participating in CE activities, they would not have had this kind of opportunity or access due to the deep rooted divisions in their society. Through this access, they expressed a shift in how they perceived their immediate environment, and broader context. While a part of preparing students for the SVP is about laying out measured expectations between community and university partners, and avoiding expectations that are unrealistic, it is exposure to the community that leads to transformation.

Anna's perception of her role in the SVP makes her both conscious and critical of the language used in discussions of CE. Anna's sense is that volunteering does not "capture" what it is that takes place in practice. She describes her role as a volunteer as multidimensional, that it includes "intellect", "emotion" and "physical participation". Thus, the SVP role is not limited to epistemological activity, nor is it purely practical, but is also ontological in nature (Barnett, 2004). The ontological nature of engagement is what creates the space for bi-directional exposure. As the Kellogg Commission states, teaching and learning cannot be limited to the transferral of knowledge to the next generation, "but of creating contexts within which students, whether young or old, can grow into the fullness of their uniqueness as human beings" (2001:30).

From Anna's perspective, CE is not merely something that one does. The "engagement" in CE is not just an action as it takes a "community" for "engagement" to be possible. It is the self in relation to others, that ontological self, the *being* in CE, not merely *doing* CE that gives CE meaning. Like Anna, Thembi takes issue with the language of CE. Thembi had criticised the "mentor-mentee" relationship, which she felt perpetuated university "superiority" and inequality in university-community relationships. Following participation in the SVP, both Thembi and Anna suggest that the language used to describe CE activities does not serve the related practice, which may not be conducive to good practice. Perhaps then, the call for reciprocity within CE as a concept itself, whether in the 1997 White Paper or literature on CE, is something students recognise and value in view of their shared reflections. As the students suggest, it is CE in practice that may inform CE objectives – or how CE ought to be articulated – in order to create better practice and understanding. For Anna, being critical of the way CE is articulated was linked to those aspects of the volunteering that requires more than the provision of a service, but *engaged* participation. Through exposure, Sandile and Makasa arrived at a similar conclusion - *being* a part of the

SVP makes the experience personal. As Anna reflected, she was required to share a part of herself, and therefore, SVP participation required further investment than she had initially anticipated. Anna and Thembi's personal experience of the SVP in practice made them more critical of the systems in which they worked, the role of university volunteering programmes within the broader community, and the accepted language within those programmes. This suggests that the SVP exposure produced an unexpected criticality.

While Thembi was more sceptical about the effects of the SVP, her time spent as a volunteer also increased her sensitivity and awareness in relation to the divisions in the community. Following SVP practice, she reached a different conclusion to that of the other students interviewed. She felt that despite the good intentions informing CE, CE as it is practiced at Rhodes University has the potential to do more harm than good, and possibly, perpetuates the status quo as opposed to advancing transformation. Thembi explained CE as entailing an "inherently" unequal relationship based on "problematic constructions" of the university and community members. For this reason, she explained:

> CE is a difficult concept for me, due to my experience of it, because it is not necessarily as dialogical as people think that it is. And it is not necessarily *A* providing something for *B* and *B* is doing the same, but rather, is a dissemination of knowledge and skills and ideas from one set of people that thinks they're incredibly better. And I will say that because there is often a perception here [at Rhodes University], that we over here have something better here. And now we are going to transplant all our great models onto people that don't have that. And to some degree, that sort of altruistic sense of 'let's help someone out' is commendable, but I think the problem with community engagement is that it negates a lot of agency from the community in general (Thembi *interview 1*, 2013).

For Thembi, there is insensitivity on the part of the university in community-university relations. If the unequal distribution of power was not a factor, then Thembi's views of CE would mirror the views of the other respondents. Due to her perception that the relationships are unequal and that the university abuses its power and status, she did not feel that CE is of benefit to the communities it purports to serve. Thembi emerged from the programme a more critical graduate, even if her views of CE are interpreted as negative. A better understanding of CE practice might be derived from students' reasons for continuing to participate, and those that might compel them to withdraw.

Many of the participants described the engagement itself as a part of what it was they were contributing to the SVP, that it was their role as citizens as opposed to university expertise that defined their contribution. The SVP experience required that they adapt to different and changing environments, which resulted in learning opportunities and shifts in consciousness, often in unexpected ways (Anna, 2013; Buchi, 2013; Sandile, 2013). A part of this process is, as Barnett (2004:258) claims, "being-for-uncertainty", which takes place in relation to "certain kinds of relationships to the world" and results in "certain kinds of disposition", which he described as both an instinctive to, and an outcome of engagement. These attributes included, according to Barnett (2004:258), "carefulness, thoughtfulness, humility, criticality, receptiveness, resilience, courage and stillness". The participants' responses to the SVP environment, and dispositions activated, are a part of who they are as critical citizens. As students become more critically aware through exposure – this exposure being a contribution or service provided by the community – they are more likely to experience other forms of transformation. It may be concluded that SVP led to a shift in consciousness in the respondents.

Does CE produce capable and balanced graduates?

It is evident in the above section that exposure did result in increased sensitivity. The exposure itself transformed students in a variety of ways. Whether experiences of the students included overcoming difficulties, achieving goals, meeting or failing to meet expectations, the lessons learned from participation in the SVP were not things that could easily be taught in a lecture theatre. The SVP might even be viewed as providing a rite of passage in the sense that together, community partners and the university community facilitate learning opportunities that prepare students for their role as active citizens in broader society. In this way, CE in a student's university years can play a critical role, as these formative years may mark a significant transition from one way of being in the world to another.

Students spoke about the importance of the experience they received through exposure to something outside their usual university routine. Makasa (2013) described this exposure through CE as giving "you things you wouldn't experience out of that situation", and as Frida (2013) explained, the SVP is "a brilliant platform for students to really participate in a much more structured, much more, I suppose you could say, safe way". Such exposure takes place when students encounter unfamiliar environments, or different social groups and norms. In this case, exposure plays an important role in the possibility of transformation, and that

transformation becomes visible when students share what it is that they had gained from CE and the unique experience the SVP process offers.

Speaking to her personal benefit from participating in a volunteering programme, Anna says:

> It is going to sound like such a selfish thing…I realise I learnt so much about myself in volunteering. I learn more about myself than I do about the community that I'm in, which is kind of a backward way of looking at it really. For me personally, I feel that I can be exposed to a lot more than I thought I could, because initially I thought the idea of CE was this sort of you're going to be going to this terrible area of the township, you're going to see horrendous things, hear horrendous things. It wasn't like that at all. I learnt that my version of terrible was very different to the version of terrible that was being put forward to me (Anna *interview 1*, 2013).

The personal benefit Anna expresses, reiterates the point made earlier that it is not only the community who is being given something, but that students receive something. Her benefit is described as confidence gained, both in her abilities to manage environments unknown to her, when she realises "[she] can be exposed to a lot more than [she] thought [she] could". The benefit is also described as a trust in her own understanding or views of the world, and a willingness to have her perceptions changed, as she realises "[her] version" is not necessarily the same as what is "put forward to [her]". More importantly, she implies that there is an expectation that the student volunteer is arriving at a programme with the intention to learn about a different space or the community partner programme. The unexpected benefit is to what extent a student volunteer experiences personal growth, education or transformation.

Anna's transformation includes a process of demystification through SVP exposure. As evidenced by Anna, there are assumptions some students have about what to expect when working with vulnerable communities or in the township. The encounter itself and experience through exposure shifted these assumptions. As a result, she felt transformed. Anna's experience resonates with those of Makasa and Sandile who described the SVP experience as empowering and "eye opening", despite challenges faced in some instances. As a result, students ought to have a more balanced outlook on their surrounding environments, and the conditions thereof. This should equip students to be more capable in terms of how they approach their social responsibilities.

Both Thembi and Anna decided to withdraw from SVP participation, but for different reasons. Despite feeling that she had gained from SVP participation, Thembi (2013) argued

that until the "us and them binary" was remedied, she could not reconcile herself with entering further SVP partnerships. Anna's reason for withdrawing from the SVP differed in that she would participate in the future and that the experience, for the most part, was positive. She explained that she was overwhelmed by the responsibility at an under-resourced SVP site. She expressed sadness that she was unable to cope, even though she felt the overall experience had given her greater confidence in her personal abilities. She explained she required additional support to be of useful service, and that time at the SVP was beginning to affect managing a heavy post-graduate work load. As a result of SVP participation, both participants reflected on what they perceived to be personal successes and limitations of their abilities concerning *balance* and *capabilities*. Both participants expressed a confidence or certainty in their convictions as a result of CE in practice.

Does CE and exposure to the community produce graduates aware of their social responsibilities?

The six participants provided a variety of understandings of CE. Rather than a diversity of understanding complicating how CE may be articulated, these interpretations and perceptions reveal varied reasons in favour of CE, or at least in favour of particular forms of CE. Participants understood CE as a means to make university resources available to a broader community as discussed in the first section of the RUCE mandate. As discussed in the second section, participants were motivated to participate in the SVP as a response to the South African context and perceived disparities. Through exposure, participants shared that access to, and contact with the community provides a deeper understanding of the perceived disparities and realities of their context.

Makasa describes exposure to different environments through SVP community partners in the following way:

> I'm very proud of working with [the community partner]. I love the [community partner]. It's possibly one of the best working relationships that I've ever had or been involved with. Because it's something, before Rhodes, I would never ever have done. I'd have never had the opportunity to encounter people who live like that, and with kids who know they're going to die at some point cause they're HIV positive, and just being engaged with that and being involved with it – amazing (Makasa *interview 1*, 2013).

Makasa shares the social consciousness gained as a result of SVP participation:

> Community engagement for me was the first time I realised there was something like social justice and it creates awareness in people. And I know it sounds horrible, and like really cheesy, and a sappy thing to say, but I think it's completely true (Makasa *interview 1*, 2013).

This marks a significant transformation for Makasa. As noted previously, students' assumptions were disrupted as they participated in the SVP. Students could test their practical skills at the community partner site, but it is not solely the benefits of concrete learning from these duties and responsibilities that potentially transforms student volunteers. Students reported unexpected benefits as a result of these encounters and exchanges. For Makasa, this shift was the result of a student being able to view life from a different perspective, or the perspectives of others she encountered through CE participation. The way the encounter becomes personal, leads to investment, and as Makasa explains, "the minute you sign up for something, you're no longer purely a volunteer, you're obliged to follow through on it". As a result, she said she would "absolutely" return to this kind of engagement, "without a doubt". This is an indication of her appreciation of the opportunity to participate at the community partner site. The sense of responsibility, or investment Makasa describes toward her role as a volunteer indicates a shift in her perception of volunteering. The experience produced a sense of social responsibility beyond a one-dimensional concept of volunteering as just an allocation of time.

For Sandile, exposure to the community through the SVP brought about a new found awareness of the conditions of his immediate environment, Grahamstown. He explains, with respect to the street kids:

> The emotional part was a challenge for me. You don't know what their story is. You don't actually know why they are there or why they are doing certain things. That was a challenge for me. Because maybe they are not in school. But then, when you talk to them, they tell you about their stories because they know some of the people [from the SVP]. For instance, they tell you that their mother is leaving them and they are trying to do work and stuff. It's actually usually that understanding, knowledge about their lives. That was my biggest thing. Because the whole community engagement comes back to your background as well. You are going out there and you will be changed by the things you see and the things you learn from these guys that tell you this and that. You will think differently about the whole of South Africa (Sandile *interview 1*, 2013).

Sandile's experience led to personal development. His experience of the SVP made him conscious of his immediate environment, but he could also map that awareness onto a

broader context. He could better appreciate the positions individuals or collectives assume within society. Boyer, Kellogg and Gibbons et al. all argue that CE is a way to connect the university with the community in which it is immersed. One might argue that this transformation is what Boyer (1990:23) would refer to as the way in which "discovery", "integration" and "application" are interconnected. Thus, Sandile's comment relates to Boyer's opinion in that the awareness of social responsibility gained is connected to a participant's role as a student, and as a citizen.

Sandile and Makasa describe their sense of personal transformation. Sandile (2013) says: "thinking about what impact you have, how much impact you can actually have, that actually teaches the sensible thing. People say just come if you want to, but you want to go back". In Sandile's comment, the way in which SVP participation becomes a transformative experience, is that it is not limited to motivating service participation, but creating a service ethos or motivation for continued participation. He explains:

> Previously I thought I'd come here, get my degree. My brother got his degree and my other brother got his Masters and what-not. And you come here to get something and leave. And I don't want to lie, I wanted to go to Johannesburg and work. But now I feel differently. I might even stay more or something like that (Sandile *interview 2*, 2013).

A part of the transformative process for Sandile was the sense of community that was created as a result of participation in the SVP. This transformation exceeds that of increased sensitivity. Sandile's sense of community gained and his *awareness of social responsibility* motivated his personal investment in, and commitment to, that community.

Consistent with Sandile's experience, the respondents in the study shared a shift in consciousness, which they described as a sense of responsibility to the community. The personal transformation of the individual volunteers within the SVP community may be understood as part of collective transformation; a process producing a greater propensity toward *social responsibility*, and engaged citizenship.

Students' understandings of the CE concept: Does the SVP graduate socially responsive citizens?

> Community engagement means giving to the environment where you live, and I have heard people say, '*what do you give; and what has the environment given you? What do people give you that you're giving back?*' And my response has always been, you do not have to

> receive first. You can give first before receiving. Basically my outlook or my principle, or outlook to community engagement, is that you've got something, not necessarily that is overflowing, but that you've got something that might benefit others and you're sharing. It's about sharing your time, your resources.
>
> Buchi *interview 1*, 2013

The students' responses were organised according to the RUCE objectives in order to map whether students are transformed through SVP practice. Respondents shared their perceptions on what they understand CE to be. In speaking through their perceptions and experiences, student narratives reveal shifts in consciousness as a result of SVP practices. The changes experienced contribute to evaluating CE outcomes, and more specifically, provide a response to whether we think students are transformed into socially responsive citizens through SVP participation - an outcome central to most CE mission statements at HEIs in South Africa, and elsewhere. In the discussions with students outlined above in relation to the RUCE mandate, the CE outcomes as expressed by the respondents do show success in accomplishing the RUCE objectives. Through student expression and the particular SVP outcomes made visible, "reciprocity" and a sense of "citizenship" were notable themes. Concluding remarks will be discussed in relation to these themes.

Reciprocity

All six of the participants in this study, including Thembi who had reservations about equality in CE relations, explained the SVP to be a bi-directional process in which there are gains and contributions on both sides of the partnership. These perceptions mirrored the survey questionnaire responses as outlined in Chapter 3, which took place prior to Rhodes SVP training and participation. Hence, an understanding of exchange rather than transfer is evident in student perceptions both prior to SVP practice, and as a result of that practice as reflected in the interviews that took place during a volunteer's SVP tenure.

In the interviews, the six participants explained that their motivation to participate was based on a sense of responsibility or duty; that they wanted to make a contribution to the environments they occupied. Students did not necessarily feel that they were a part of the Grahamstown community, as most of them explained that the city was a short term home base for the duration of their studies. While their initial motivations were not based on a sense of community, they felt it was important to contribute to society and that the SVP provided them with that platform.

As noted in many of the responses, motivations for joining the SVP included anticipated gains. Through participation, students gained a clearer understanding of those gains as a result of SVP experience. As Sandile explained:

> I go there to help wherever I can, and participate wherever I can, all the rules we have to learn, you can also take something out of this whole community engagement. So I see it as going out there, wherever it may be, location [the township] or the more privileged people, and engaging with them. And actually helping them, but also helping myself in a way of seeing how things are done and learning (Sandile *interview 1*, 2013).

Thus, it is evident that many of the students do understand CE to be bi-directional in nature, and therefore, that CE in practice does reflect a sense of reciprocity in university-community relations.

From Buchi's (2013) perspective, engagement should be about "sharing". For her, "sharing" is an intuitive response to what it means to be a part of a community. In emphasising the need to "share" as an interpretation of CE, Buchi points to an interpretation of what it means to be an engaged citizen. While she explains that "you do not have to receive *first*", by implication, there is reward or something to receive. A possible interpretation of Buchi's contribution is that reciprocity is key to understanding CE, even if the form it takes, or what it is that will be reciprocated, is not clear from the outset. Rather, an openness to exchange is the first step to creating reciprocal relations.

Buchi explains what she understands "giving" to mean in the context of CE. For her, the idea of citizenship in a context of inequality is central to the purpose of CE inside and outside of the university. Buchi (2013) says, "it becomes a lifestyle at some point", because through engagement, people begin to see outside of themselves, that they are no longer "one person". People begin to see themselves as "an extension of the other person", and therefore, they become "a part of your family in a unique way" (Buchi *interview 1*, 2013). Thus, engagement can lead to reciprocity, but reciprocity is also an instinctive outcome of engagement, especially if viewed in the context of citizenship or a sense of community.

With a sense of reciprocity and citizenship as central to student reflections on CE, or what they understand the purpose of CE to be in HEIs, it was interesting to note to what extent students perceived themselves as gaining more from the partnership than what they perceived themselves as able to contribute. This is an interesting observation given that the extent to which CE is touted as being beneficial to the community often obscures the service the

community is providing to the university. If so, there is much to be reflected on in relation to the purpose of CE at HEIs, and how such relations are articulated in individual HEIs that respond to diverse contextual conditions. The students' enhanced appreciation for what the community partners were making available to them and what they were able to learn through exposure both disrupted and exceeded their expectations. Through SVP practice, a student's recognition that CE involves exchange rather than transfer is amplified. This SVP outcome resonates with the Kellogg Commission's observation that "everyone benefits", but that "students stand to gain the most" (1999:13).

Participants felt they had greater confidence as a result of SVP practice. Student exposure to different environments provided them the opportunity to learn soft skills alongside an academic discipline. They felt better equipped to adapt to unfamiliar circumstances, and gained an increased awareness of, or sensitivity toward perspectives different to their own. Some students were surprised that the exposure to different environments did not "shock" them (Anna *interview 1*, 2013). Respondents felt comfortable with the unfamiliar environment, or in some instances, realised they shared similarities and related to the unfamiliar environment or context, as opposed to estrangement or difference. It is evident from the student responses that they had gained positive experience through the SVP, resulting in what might be referred to as personal education. In view of these responses, there are benefits to the university, and perhaps the community, as a result of the SVP.

As the community partners provide a platform in which students are able to self-evaluate their soft and hard skills, and their expectations concerning their own abilities, students gain greater self-awareness and confidence. The platform also allows greater awareness of context. As a result, students are better equipped to take action according to their beliefs and convictions, but due to increased awareness, their actions should also be more considered and inclusive. Therefore, through a greater sense of social context, students become more critical, capable and responsive to the environments in which they find themselves, and perhaps too, those environments they might someday enter. In view of the students responses, being exposed to the knowledge of communities and different environments enhanced their appreciation for the community stakeholders' contributions to CE. Respondents gained a clearer understanding of why CE relations are reciprocal, as through exercising a sense of citizenship and social responsibility, they were provided the opportunity to learn through the SVP in ways that exceeded their expectations, producing a deeper respect for the necessary other in collective collaboration.

The above benefits bring into question what is valued in the services being exchanged, and the outcomes thereof. As Boyer suggested, service as a part of university scholarship needs to be re-evaluated, that being the value attributed to service as a form of scholarship. By way of deduction, universities need to reflect on what it is communities offer universities, how service offered by the community makes the work of the university more relevant, as well as assessment and acknowledgement of the value afforded by community knowledge and expertise. Student reflections reveal to what extent they gain from the SVP. The findings show that there are unexpected gains that contribute to a student's ability to evaluate who they are, and how the SVP supports them in shaping them into who they would like to become. To articulate these values according to what a student has to gain personally in order to promote CE may further contaminate university-community power relations as CE should not be about what a student can "take" from the SVP. Rather, community recognition is about the university learning to acknowledge community knowledge and services so that reciprocity is considered, as opposed to merely assumed. This concern around the way in which CE is articulated had been expressed by Anna who explained what the word "volunteer" meant to her, or the "mentor-mentee" relationship described by Thembi. Thus, students reveal the need for further evaluation of what makes CE reciprocal, and how such practices ought to be articulated.

Citizenship

As noted above, citizenship and reciprocity are interlinked and overlapping concepts in the CE context. Due to the holistic nature of learning through the practice of CE, students are better equipped to contribute to society. As the Kellogg Commission states, this kind of education "fits [graduates] with the skills, attitudes and values required for success in life" (1997:35). As Sandile (2013) explained, "it changes you as you go along", or as other participants noted, students are provided with new perspectives leading to personal transformation. Therefore, it may be argued that exposure as a characteristic of CE had a major influence on students' perceptions of the community in which they worked, as well as how they might perceive inter-community relations. While students were motivated to join the SVP to exercise a sense of citizenship and social responsibility, the sense of community gained, and the opportunity for students to familiarise themselves with spaces that had previously been defined by social division, resulted in a shift in consciousness as students gained a deeper awareness of their roles as citizens.

Most of the students interviewed expressed a desire to further participate in CE, either during their university career, or as part of lifelong learning, echoing a Kellogg Commission objective above (1997:35). Some, like Anna and Makasa, anticipated future involvement in community projects, while others, such as Sandile, suggested that community development had taken on a greater importance to him than personal wealth. Thus, the SVP appeared to help develop a service ethos. These experiences provided students with an enhanced appreciation for service and a sense of their potential contribution to, or place within society.

Thembi who had misgivings about the validity of the SVP in its current form expressed the following:

> I am glad for the experience, and I think that going forward I would like to be part of this project. But firstly I need to reconcile myself with this us and them binary... this rhetoric of helping these people. And firstly that tension needs to be considered very thoughtfully – so I am glad that I had this opportunity because that opportunity unveiled my eyes to why that was inherently problematic. And if I hadn't had that, I wouldn't think about this the way that I do now (Thembi *interview 1*, 2013).

Despite her concern that there are risks in CE programmes at universities, which may affect community partners, she valued the experience and the increased awareness participation afforded her. Thus, she too expressed a desire to *be* a *part* of the CE project, provided that greater equality in such relations be recognised and ensured.

Thembi's position on university-community relations, which was significantly different to the other respondents, highlights a number of issues. In consideration of one major issue, that many volunteering sites involve vulnerable communities and are often under-resourced, there is risk that university members, often in a more powerful position, will impose themselves and their ideas on community partners. While this risk may entail harmful consequences and must be accounted for, it is possible that Thembi underestimates the agency of community partners who make these practical learning opportunities available to students. It is for the community partner to establish the extent to which students may get involved. It may even be that the community partner, in the case of Thembi's programme, failed to direct students. Hence, the necessity for the terms of engagement to be negotiated and expectations to be outlined is integral to ensuring that partnerships are mutually beneficial, and as inclusive as possible. The lines are easily blurred between being responsible and accountable for one's part in a collaborative effort and undermining another's agency. Through access to

community partner sites afforded to volunteers, it may be the students who stand to gain the most as a result of SVP exposure. The community will hold the knowledge necessary for programmes to be successful at their sites, and it is for the community partner to drive projects. This question of agency will direct a student's understanding of their position as citizens, but also, those citizens with whom they engage. This need for equality as part of understanding citizenship as a concept in CE, necessitates an understanding of reciprocity. Reciprocity is necessary in order to acknowledge agency in each and every instance of engagement.

The research undertaken here suggests that participation in a student volunteering programme can indeed help transform students into more socially responsible citizens. It becomes apparent in student reflections that the shifts in consciousness that they experienced, exceeded their initial motivation to be responsive, and awakens a consciousness that is concerned about impact. This impact is not one based on a "grandiose" idea about the student's contribution to change. Rather than a need for change that rests on student's personal perspectives, volunteers come to recognise shared values that consider the roles and perspectives of the collective. This shift is one from civic responsiveness, to civic responsibility.

The student narratives reveal that volunteers do not enter programmes without already having a sense of social duty or appreciation for the learning opportunity being made available to them. As the findings suggest, it is through the SVP that students gain a greater appreciation for the community, a clearer sense of context, and a keener sense of social responsibility in their role as students and as citizens.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on one form of CE practice at Rhodes University, namely the SVP. Through student perceptions and experiences of the SVP in practice, the chapter explored what students understand by the term CE, and whether students experienced transformation as a result of their SVP participation. In doing so, I set out to find out whether the CE objective to graduate better citizens is indeed a CE outcome.

Through SVP practice, respondents in this study experienced personal transformations that are consistent with the CE objective, which aims to contribute to graduating critical, capable and responsible citizens. As students experienced a shift in the way they perceived the

environments they occupy and their own position in society, the increased awareness resulted in a greater propensity to actively participate – participation with a deeper investment in collective conditions that shape the society of which they are a part. Thus, the research suggests that the SVP does develop a sense of citizenship.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

CE has been implemented in universities across South Africa. This study asked whether students are transformed as a result of their involvement in the SVP at Rhodes University. More precisely, the study questioned possible transformation in two areas: does the SVP as a CE programme at Rhodes University contribute to the development and promotion of social and civic responsibility of students; and does participation impact on students' development of self? Student volunteers' perceptions and experiences were explored relative to the objectives outlined in the RUCE mandate. In the narratives presented, transformation was visible. Significantly, respondents related a desire for future engagement beyond SVP tenure. Students expressed a deeper sense of responsibility in their role as citizens, and a greater appreciation and respect for their community.

A volunteer is often thought of as one who gives rather than one who receives. RUCE, along with many other university led CE programmes understand volunteering as a mutually beneficial exchange (RUCE, 2014f:17). An interesting finding in this research project was that all the volunteers interviewed for this study expressed the feeling that they had gained far more than what they perceived themselves as able to contribute. Transformation of students, their mindsets, how they perceive themselves, their capabilities, as well as those around them and society at large, are affected as a result of personal experience and participation within the SVP. The shifts or changes shared by respondents often took place in unexpected ways, perhaps due to the unique platform CE provides, and the circumstances presented through collaboration between diverse communities in real world context.

In view of the SVP in practice, this study concludes that transformation occurred, or that consciousness was expanded in the following ways. Firstly, students experienced a shift regarding their *expectations* of university-community relations. Not only is this shift important to students and their role in the SVP, but has broader application in that it provides students with insight into relationships and social conditions outside of their comfort zone. The disruption of expectations led to an openness to new or unfamiliar settings, environments and relationships. Secondly, and perhaps as a consequence of disrupted expectations, students gained a new found *sensitivity* to surrounding social conditions. In many instances, this sensitivity was a result of recognition that the students themselves are often in a privileged position, and have a responsibility to make a contribution. Understanding this privilege was

also a response to an acknowledgement that students were being invited into spaces they might not ordinarily have access to, and highlights an acknowledgment of SVP gains and the community contribution being offered to students. Thirdly, the study suggests that perhaps the biggest "eye-opener" for students was *exposure*. The element of exposure may be understood as a result of the above two shifts in consciousness regarding expectations and sensitivity. However, it is also an element that stands alone, as CE provided students with real world, or practical learning outside of the classroom. This real world learning includes personal education on how students perceive themselves in relation to the world they live in. Exposure to different environments allowed the students to disrupt their own assumptions. The above three elements, expectations, sensitivity and exposure contributed to transformative experiences as shared by the participants. Students felt a sense of new found awareness resulting in expanded consciousness, and a sense of *citizenship*. The personal education and experience afforded by the SVP resonates with the ontological learning required as suggested by Barnett (2004). Together, *knowing*, *being* and *action* provides students with more holistic learning opportunities as noted by Barnett (2004) and others (Boyer, 1990; Gibbons et al., 1994; Kellogg Commission, 2001).

As evidenced by the respondents, the university is an aggregation of resources and expertise. Through CE, breaking down divisions through bi-directional exposure, and sharing university resources (which could be viewed as public resources) can lead to achieving the redress, redistribution and development envisioned in CE policy (DoE, 1997). Furthermore, students are temporarily members of the university, but life-long members of a community. Thus, graduating better citizens will, perhaps, have long term impact within society. The outcomes may not have direct impact on immediate communities, but on future communities of which SVP participants will be a part.

The SVP as one form of CE may not have immediate effect on a student's discipline. However, it might be argued that exposure to the community is not just a benefit for the student, but for the university as well. The way in which members of the university, and most certainly the students, approach the work of the university, ought to be through engagement with a broader community. It is this engagement with the community - perhaps in a variety of forms - that makes the work of the university more relevant, as promoted by Boyer and the Kellogg Commission. Relevance will always be a priority in the work of the university, and this is possible through considered engagement.

With respect to the SVP, community partners who make a service available to the university may or may not gain benefits with lasting effect, or there may be no direct, immediate impact as a result of engagement with the university. The community partners contribute to graduating better citizens of those volunteers. Together, university communities and broader communities prepare students for their role in society. As already noted, a greater consideration of this service and how it is valued is necessary in order to avoid the unhelpful binary of powerful university and subservient community in the CE exchange.

A refined sense of citizenship emerges from students' experience in the SVP in the following ways:

- disruption of their expectations (with regard to gains and contributions through practice, and self knowledge and social awareness through exposure);
- their strong sense of reciprocity;
- their appreciation of SVP impact on communities, which may be positive or negative;
- and their appreciation of the role and responsibility of community partners.

This research project argues that students are more likely to become responsible citizens as a result of SVP participation, but as participants suggest, the value of exchange needs to be evaluated by both sides of the partnership in order to ensure reciprocity in CE relations. This includes the relevance of CE practices to the work of the university, and to the broader public – not only according to the objectives as envisioned in national policy, but according to those communities in which universities are situated, and the university-communities themselves.

A tension exists between the need for responsible engagement that is relevant and the social benefits experienced by the volunteers. A narrow definition of CE is not favoured in practice. This may be to avoid prescriptive practices at the expense of some of the unexpected outcomes and the richness of the experiences, as related by the volunteers in this study.

The importance of the role of community partners emerged from this study, and further research should include: community partner perceptions of the SVP; community perceptions of the SVP; and the role and responsibilities of community partners in SVP success.

The participants in this study all express the sense that they were transformed as a result of their SVP training and practice. While they emphasised personal gain and education, which

they attributed to exposure and access to new experiences afforded through the SVP, these *personal transformations* of individual volunteers do represent *social transformation* aligned with the goals envisioned in the 1997 White Paper. While it is beyond the scope of this study to reflect upon the impact, benefits and limitations with regard to community perceptions, the students in this study reveal the possible transformation that results from SVP participation, and the way in which students become more critically aware, responsible citizens. The student collective interviewed for this study show that CE – one way in which to imbue both personal and social transformation – is about getting to know another, a necessary other, despite divisions that often define the communities in which we find ourselves. Possible benefits may exceed the imagined and hoped for goals, provided CE is considered, maintains the integrity of its offerings, and that shared or collective values are protected and celebrated over and above individual contributions, benefits and rewards.

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Appendix A

Community Engagement Volunteering Programme

Questionnaire

I hope that with your participation in this research, that we might contribute to the quality of Community Engagement at Rhodes University and improving the experience of those involved in the SVP.

Full name:

Student number:

Email address:

Department:

Student Volunteering Programme

1. Are you a fulltime student at Rhodes University?

   ● Yes ● No

2. Are you a visiting student and part of an international or exchange programme?

   ● Yes ● No

3. If you are a visiting student, is being a part of Community Engagement compulsory?

   ● Yes ● No

4. What year of study are you in?

● 1 ● 2 ● 3

● 4 ● 5 ● 6 or greater

5. Do you have any previous experience with Community Engagement at Rhodes University?

   ● Yes ● No

6. If you answered yes to question 5, which Community Engagement programme/s were you involved with?

   Answer:

7. Have you been a part of any other kind of Community Engagement outside of Rhodes University?

   ● Yes ● No

8. If you answered yes to question 7, please provide which Community Engagement activities you were involved with?

   Answer:

9. Why have you chosen to join the Community Engagement volunteering programme at Rhodes University?

   Answer:

10. Where or from whom did you first hear about Community Engagement?

    Answer:

11. How was Community Engagement explained to you?

    Answer:

12. If you were to choose a few words (no more than one sentence) to describe community engagement, what would they be?

Answer:

13. Who would you say the “community” is in Community Engagement?

    Answer:

14. What do you understand “engagement” to be?

    Answer:

15. What do you think the role of Community Engagement is at universities?

    Answer:

16. What kind of Community Engagement initiative would you like to be a part of?

    Answer:

17. What kind of experience do you anticipate from your involvement in Community Engagement?

    Answer:

18. What are you looking forward to most from this experience in being a part of Community Engagement?

    Answer:

19. What are you looking forward to least from this experience in being a part of Community Engagement?

    Answer:

20. In summary, what do you understand Community Engagement to be?

    Answer:

CONSENT FORM

By submitting the questionnaire and completed consent form to me, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

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I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Simone Levy in the Department of Politics and International Studies at Rhodes University. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO**