

When university and community are incompatible:

An ethnographic reflection on the institutional and contextual challenges of engaged research in South Africa

Abstract

In this dissertation, I draw on national higher education legislation, and institutional policy of the University of Cape Town, to outline three goals of engaged research in South Africa: to contribute to social transformation; to facilitate relationships with constituencies previously excluded from higher education; and to challenge traditional models of knowledge and knowing. I outline two obstacles to the achievement of each of these three goals, making clear the points at which institutional structures and policies are incompatible with the aspirations of engaged research. In response to these obstacles, I propose a reflexive research approach, which prioritizes the *process* of research as much as the outputs. I argue that valuing all parts of the research, which translates in practice to creating channels for collaboration and reciprocal learning throughout the research process, can mitigate the institutional obstacles to engaged research. I conclude by arguing that both individual researcher, and the institution to which she belongs, are responsible for achieving the goals of engaged research and, without the political and practical support of the latter, engaged research will remain on the margins of academic activity in South Africa.

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I did not create the knowledge inked into these pages; I translated it from the thoughts and histories of others into letters and words. I thank my *mas* of the Masincediswe Seniors' Club, and the staff of the Enkululekweni Wellness Centre, for sharing their time, stories, experiences and affection with me. I would never have come to understand the ethic of care, had I not been so enveloped by their warmth and by their love. Lulama, Lulu, Ma'Monica, and especially Tabita, have made this experience a transformative one. I cannot thank them enough.

I want to acknowledge too my colleagues at Stanford BOSP Cape Town, who encourage and enable experiments in community engagement—including my research—with immense sensitivity and passion.

While getting to know the women of the Wellness Centre was one of the best experiences of my life, writing this dissertation was one of the worst. I had a team of family and friends cheering me on, and I am particularly grateful to my extraordinary parents for all of their support.

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ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE OUTWARD-LOOKING UNIVERSITY

I'm waiting for the bus to take me to my field site; I've been waiting for an hour, just watching other lanes fill-up. Every bus has come, gone and come again except for mine. In between the 'Golden Arrow' public busses floats a bright blue Jammie Shuttle: "UCT Student and Staff Transport Service" embossed on its sides. Driving down the empty lane in front of me, it comes to a stop just north of the terminus, close enough to be a part of the space, not close enough to have a defined place here. Bus. Bus. Bus. Bus. Another shuttle. For every few busses, a bright blue one-way Jammie Shuttle. Waiting and waiting with the woman who works three mornings a week on this side of town, who lives in the neighbourhood just next to my field site, who's been sitting waiting with me for this lost bus. Another bright blue shuttle, two hours now after I saw the first. Two hours on this warm bricked bench. I stand and shake my head, "I think I'll just go tomorrow," I say to the woman waiting to go home. I walk down the lane to just north of the terminus—close enough to be part of the space, not close enough to have a defined place here—get on the Jammie and am shuttled back to campus.

At the University of Cape Town's Social Responsiveness Symposium in November 2012, I was one of the few students in attendance. This was not a surprise; the last two symposia reflected a similar pattern. At each symposium, the vice-chancellor or one of his deputies speaks about the value of social responsiveness in the institution and the importance of academic activity that qualifies as socially responsive. Awards are presented to the individual academic and to the academic team who have done the most noteworthy work in social responsiveness, and all symposium attendees are given a copy of the annually produced UCT Social Responsiveness Report. As more than one of the academics participating in this year's symposium commented: it is always the same group of us who attend these events. On reflection, I agree. While the number of participants grows slightly every year, social responsiveness, engaged scholarship, and community engagement (as well as the range of other terms used to describe the practice of academics making an intentional effort to work *with* external constituencies) all refer to a movement still relegated to the margin of academic activity at the University of Cape Town.

UCT's Institutional Planning Department released the university's first Social Responsiveness Policy in 2008. The 2009 Strategies of Change document, which outlined the six strategic goals for UCT 2010 – 2014, emphasized community engagement and social responsiveness. Social responsiveness is recognized as one of the three core functions of UCT, alongside research and teaching and learning. Why is it then, despite all this aspiration, engagement is still so marginal; and why is engaged scholarship a practice so exceptional it is recognized in an annual report? While these two questions alone provide enough impetus to investigate the practice of community engagement at UCT, the question that is most relevant to my experience at UCT is why do so few

students attend the university's social responsiveness symposium.

I could list anecdotal answers, or I could draw on the answers of others who argue that while socially responsive education is a growing trend globally, it makes many in the institution “uneasy” (Watson et al, 2011: 19). As the empirical answer to this question supports the anecdotes I have heard over the years I offer it instead: much as community engagement and engaged scholarship is touted in national and institutional policy as a valuable, necessary and epistemically worthwhile endeavour, there is insufficient institutional support for this kind of knowledge production, an insufficiency that arises out of both a lack of capacity and a lack of will. While I offer in this dissertation a longer answer, the argument I propose in the following chapters is captured in the above sentence. My dissertation is an ethnographically illustrated methodological study of how community engagement as a theoretical construct can be realized in research practice, and what the institutional barriers are to that realization. I argue that if a student is motivated to take seriously the goals of engaged research, then they need the support of their institution to achieve those aspirations. The role of the institution is not irrelevant in engaged research. Through their discussion of “collaboration as resistance”, Benson and Nagar (2006: 585) show that higher education institutions mediate engaged research processes heavily, in a variety of ways. In line with Benson and Nagar's conclusion, Peacock (2008: 173) proposes that one of the primary points of institutional mediation in engaged research are the values *of* the institution, as well as the place of values *in* the institution. In consideration of the above, I use my own experience to illustrate not just how difficult it is for a student to do engaged research at UCT, but to do specifically engaged research that fulfils the values-based aspiration of sensitive, transformative, developmental and socially just academic activity aspired to in institutional and national higher education policy.

It is not my intention to limit my critiques to UCT, and many of the arguments I put forward are more broadly applicable to other public higher education institutions in South Africa. I use UCT as my key example only because I am a student there and my research operated within the confines of that institution. While UCT as an institution has provided me with ample evidence to build my argument, this research is based primarily on the eighteen months that I have spent at the Enkululekweni Wellness Centre in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. In order to make clear to the reader the contextual setting of my research, I start this dissertation by offering a brief account of the geographical and institutional spaces I negotiated during the course of this research. I do this to orientate the reader to my fieldsite and to introduce the people whose voices, ideas and stories give life to this text. I am not convinced that I understand Cape Town as a city, much less as a field site with all the politics that accompany that designation, but I offer what interpretation I can. I also introduce the theoretical departure points for this research: the disciplines and fields that—along

with the physical site—sculpted the terrain of my research into particular patterns of activity and ideology.

For conceptual clarity, I outline briefly what I mean by certain terms before going on to outline my argument. ‘Community engagement’ refers to the work of university staff and students in constituencies external to the university and can take on a number of forms from research to volunteering. ‘Engaged scholarship’ describes a particular kind of engagement, where engagement with external constituencies is intentionally based on the academic background and expertise of the individual or unit (Cooper, 2011: 21). Engaged research is a sub-field of engaged scholarship. The three primary foundations of engaged scholarship—the kind of engagement I write about in this dissertation—are: engagement relates to knowledge practices, engagement is a reciprocal process between universities and external constituencies, and engagement is based on a mutually beneficial partnership (Boyer, 1996; Cooper, 2011: 2; Holland and Ramaley, 2008: 34). Proponents of engaged scholarship argue that through structuring and understanding engagement as a knowledge-laden process, it is easier to recognize the knowledge embedded in external constituencies than when engagement does not revolve around knowledge directly. Furthermore, through engaged scholarship projects, members of the public are positioned as active contributors to academic knowledge, not merely passive recipients of that knowledge (Barker, 2004: 127). Barker’s argument above is grounded in a Freirean understanding of knowledge, which is that people have a “universal right to participate in the production of knowledge... [thereby making research]... part of a process of personal and social transformation” (Smith et al as cited in Kassam and Tettey, 2003: 157). If, as Kassam and Tettey argue (2003: 157), academics are granted a level of power and authority from their position as society’s “knowers”, then it stands to reason that community members who are enrolled as “knowers” in the research process are able to access a measure of this authority through taking on that role (Holland and Ramaley, 2008: 34). Thus, as Hall argues (2009: 4), the scholarship of engagement is one that is concerned with the redistribution of epistemic power within society, which echoes the Freirean roots of the movement.

In Chapters Two, Three and Four, I explore three of the aspirations of engaged research: that it should have a social justice values-based orientation and contribute to South Africa’s national project of social transformation; that it facilitate the building of relationships with external constituents who have been excluded from higher education in South Africa; and that it challenge existing models of knowledge and recognize new systems of knowledge and new kinds of knowers. In each chapter I consider two obstacles to achieving each of these aspirations, obstacles that an individual researcher has to negotiate in the course of engaged research. These six obstacles arise out of the institutional context of the university; in other words, they are characteristic of

university practice but are in tension with the goals of community engagement broadly and engaged research more specifically. It is my intention to show that these obstacles translate to inadequate support for researchers—specifically student researchers—who take seriously the policy goals of national higher education and institutional social responsiveness.

My discussion in Chapter Two concentrates on the role of public universities in South Africa with regard to community engagement and specifically to engaged research. I use as reference points South Africa's national policies on higher education as well as the University of Cape Town's institutional policies on social responsiveness. I show that, while the ideological foundation of university-community engagement in South Africa is grounded in social justice values, in reality, the goal for engaged research to contribute to the achievement of social justice is not met without complication. I argue further that the responsibility to fulfil this social justice aspiration lies as much with the institution as it does with the individual researcher. I close Chapter Two first by problematizing the definition of the 'common good', and then by proposing that the ideological aspiration of engaged research could be more easily met if that aspiration was differently understood. My point is simply that the national and institutional policies governing community engagement are so meaninglessly vague on what is actually entailed by terms like transformation, social justice and common good that arguably everything and nothing an individual engaged researcher does can qualify as socially just. At the end of Chapter Two, the first phase of my argument reads that: while authoritative bodies in higher education have articulated a desire that community engagement be oriented toward contributing to social justice, this goal is difficult to achieve for two reasons. First, too much responsibility is devolved to individual researchers who do not necessarily have the capacity to meet this goal, and second, it is not clear what is actually meant by "contributing to the achievement of social justice" or "contributing to the common good" or "working towards the transformation of society", therefore, it is difficult to ascertain at what point or whether an individual engaged researcher has achieved the goal of doing so.

In Chapter Three I focus on the second goal of engaged research; building relationships with external constituencies. I discuss three interlinked themes in this chapter: community, relationships and identity. My discussion illustrates the complexity of building an institutional relationship with a community when an individual researcher and the institution at which they are based have different understandings of 'community'. This difference of understanding forms the first obstacle to achieving the goal of building mutually beneficial and equitable relationships. The second obstacle I outline is that institutionally constructed identities like 'researcher' or 'ethnographer' limit the way in which relationships can be built between individuals in the research process. The tension that can exist between individual and institutional interests in engaged

research is highlighted, and it should be clear to the reader at this point that to speak of ‘university’ as one entity is as problematic as speaking of ‘community’ as such.¹

In Chapter Four, I address the third goal of engaged research, which is to recognize, value and introduce into the university different kinds of knowledge and ways of knowing. I offer an account of the institutionalization of knowledge and knowledge practices to illustrate how there is direct competition between achieving this epistemic goal of engagement and achieving other institutional goals related to knowledge production. This competition demonstrates that while engaged research is a seemingly genuine concern of the university, when some of the requirements of that research—including building relationships with community—come into conflict with the business of producing knowledge, institutional structures make the compromise of the former an almost necessary response. In this chapter I make explicit two institutional obstacles to achieving the epistemic goal of engaged research: the undervaluing of experiential and embodied knowledge, and the pressure to produce peer-reviewable knowledge. This chapter illustrates better than any of the others that without institutional change, engaged research will struggle to move from individual activity to university-wide movement.

The fifth chapter of this dissertation shifts focus from the preceding three. Chapters Two, Three and Four describe three aspirations of engaged research, and show how institutional structures adversely affect the achievement of these three aspirations, either by offering inadequate support to individual researchers, or through direct competition with other institutional goals. In contrast, Chapter Five looks at how an individual researcher can lessen the negative impact of the institution through intentionally including particular activities in the research, namely collaboration, reciprocal learning and service. The argument in this chapter is premised on a belief that the goals of engaged research are better met through activities *during* the research, as opposed to generating a particular kind of research product. Benson and Nagar (2006: 586) propose—in relation to rethinking collaborative research—that “it is crucial that we consider how the process unfolds—what is said/written, individually and dialogically—and how a consideration of the mutually constitutive relationships between processes and products of collaboration can open up new spaces for intellectual and political interventions”. While I talk about research method throughout this paper, in this chapter I focus specifically on the process of doing research, and argue that equal if not more attention should be paid to all the phases of research, even if the final research product is the only component of the research formally valued by the university. I conclude Chapter Five by

¹ I use the term ‘community’ throughout this paper. In cases where I do not offer an explicit explanation for the term, I use ‘community’ in the way used in UCT policy, referring to constituencies external to the university who have been/are marginalized.

arguing that one of the easiest ways to shift focus, time and attention onto different phases of research is to embody a reflexive approach, where constant critical reflection on each phase of one's research informs the following phases.

I have no doubt that engaged research is more ethical, more relevant and more appropriate to South Africa's developing democracy than research that does not take as seriously issues of social justice and transformation. However, I find it problematic that while national and institutional policies agree in theory with this belief, there is insufficient practical support for individual researchers doing this kind of research. I considered ending my dissertation with a call for an epistemic revolution, but I am aware of the irony in asking the university to recognize that argument as valid. Instead I end up as a student somewhat disillusioned by a discipline and an institution either unable or unwilling to make the changes I argue are necessary to meet the demands of engaged research. Disillusioned, but also hopeful. Hopeful because the rewards of engaged research are so deep and so edifying to all involved that surely once researchers—both academic staff and students—understand how meaningful an engaged research project can be, there will be an exponential growth of interest in it. Thus, I conclude this dissertation hopeful that research practice will change, and change in a complementary cycle of change in the institution.

The Enkululekweni Wellness Centre

"Have you met my new interns?" Lulama asks me, "They're from Holland."

"No," I reply, "Where're you hiding them?"

She takes my arm and we walk up the stairs to the old office. I greet the two of them and we chat about the work they're doing here.

"And you?" the one on the left asks, "How do you fit in?"

Lulama laughs and looks at me as I answer.

"Well, uuh, I came to do my masters research here. I was going to stay just a couple of months. That was like a year and a half ago now."

I reach over to Lulama and she taps my hand with hers as I continue,

"But then I couldn't leave, so I still visit when I can. This place has something about it... You'll see."

I conducted research at the Enkululekweni Wellness Centre in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. While the Wellness Centre is an interesting place in itself, Cape Town as a post-apartheid city is as important a variable in understanding the context of my research as the micro-site within it. The city's geography is intimately linked with its political history, particularly the Groups Areas Act of 1950 that resulted in its current shape. The forced removal of residents designated "coloured" and "black" from District Six in the 1970s is perhaps the most well-known race-based relocation effort in Cape Town. However, race-based relocation of residents had started as early as 1901 when black residents of the city were relocated to Ndabeni, designated by the apartheid state as a "Native

Location” (Jensen, 2008: 48). Relocations took place over the course of the 20th century, only accelerating with the passing of the Group Areas Act. Between the 1960s and 1980s the terrain of the city shifted in seemingly irrevocable ways. As Soudien (2006: 586) describes: “Over 60 local communities were violently torn apart. New townships were built – built to cleanse the city of its malevolent blackness and then to organise blacks according to their supposed ethnic roots.” One of the consequences of these highly efficient and effective relocations is that the city remains today very segregated.

Perhaps more salient than the distribution of population by race in the city, is the distribution of resources. The very western band of the city—the suburbs that edge the Atlantic Ocean and that surround Table Mountain—is affluent and well-serviced. I work, study and live in what is referred to as the ‘Southern Suburbs’, the suburbs that make up a substantial section of this western band. Over the ten years that I have been in this area, I have seen bicycle lanes built; I have seen fibre optic cables laid for speedy internet connections; I have chatted to the men who come to collect my big black wheelie bin of refuse every week. When the city council needs to turn off my street’s electricity supply to do maintenance, I receive a polite note in my post-box. Recently, the council installed speed bumps on the road I drive down to visit my parents. In this western band of the city, residents’ every need is met. Electricity and water supply is constant to the point of being taken for granted; roads are smooth and cleaned by men wearing neon vests; and there is a total absence of service-delivery protests. However, these services deteriorate and even stop in some cases with distance from the city centre. The very south-eastern band of the city, where Khayelitsha sits on sandy dunes, is aptly described as a “parallel world” (Jensen, 2008: 49). Cape Town in turn, has been described aptly as “a tale of three cities” (Mertens in Soudien, 2006: 109), where the white, coloured and black areas of Cape Town are so starkly different in some sense that they are representative of three very different cities (Soudien, 2006: 109).

I do not want to dwell on the difficulties of living in the east of the city. This is not because living here is not without challenges, but rather because these challenges do not necessarily translate to stagnation or disability. People who live here, *live* here. Children play, teenagers fall in love, and elderly people complain about the summer south-easterly wind. There are so many representations of Khayelitsha and its neighbours that focus only on the negative, on the challenges and on the deficits. Not only does negating their assets, potential, and strengths disempower the people who live and flourish here, it also dehumanizes them to a degree. Besteman (2006: 586) argues that the constant visual and textual representations of black South Africans in poverty normalizes this state of affairs and desensitizes the elite who consume those representations. Additionally, focusing on needs and not assets offers an unnecessarily partial view of what is

actually the case. For example, Lulu—an employee of the Wellness Centre—complained often about people who pray for her because she is blind. She described sitting on the taxi listening to them go on about how she must make right with God so that she can be healed. “I tell them that I have a house and job and what do they have? They must save their prayers themselves, I don’t need them.” Therefore, while the difficulties of living in Khayelitsha may be substantial in some cases, what is more meaningful to my discussion is that there are massive inequalities between the areas of the city wherein my research took place. The University of Cape Town in Rondebosch is only 30 kilometres by road away from the Enkululekweni Wellness Centre in Khayelitsha, but the distance between them is marked by dramatic differences in access to socio-economic rights and resources.

Khayelitsha, one of Cape Town’s youngest townships, was established in the apartheid-era 1980s as a black area. The township has grown rapidly and is now home to an estimated million people, divided into four policing districts. Khayelitsha is built on sand dunes and wetlands, making it difficult for some and impossible for other services to be delivered. The township is divided into sections, towns and villages, and there is great diversity in these subdivisions. In Ilitha Park, three-bedroomed houses have lavender bushes in the front garden, art on the walls and paved driveways. In RR-Section, one-roomed shacks have neither taps nor toilets; they have old tyres on their roofs to hold the corrugated iron sheets in place when it gets windy. I did my research on the border of H- and I-Section, an area that has predominantly formal housing, lampposts and street signs. While there are not the high-end cars in the driveways that you may see in Ilitha Park, shacks and backyard structures are the exception rather than the norm. When I asked the women of Masincediswe Seniors Club—I explain below how I worked with them—of the one thing that best describes Khayelitsha, I was told unequivocally:

“The wind.”

“The wind?”

“Oooh, when we first came here the wind just blew and blew.” Ma’Regina screws up her eyes and gestures with her hands. There are nods and waves of agreement from the other women listening in.

“Yes,” she continues, “it would blow the sand right into your house.” She pauses, looking for a second at the pale green knitting in her hands. Then she turns to me and shakes her head, “you could try anything but that sand would come in.”

In this part of Khayelitsha, a civil society organization, Ikamva Labantu, has built a primary healthcare centre called the Enkulukweni Wellness Centre. Ikamva Labantu was established in 1963 and works in a variety of sectors: Early Childhood Development, Orphan and Vulnerable Children and Senior Citizens. As one of the staff members at the Wellness Centre explained to me when I first arrived, “Ikamva as an organization was founded in the apartheid context where it was almost impossible for people to take responsibility, and the organization had to embody a

particular approach. But things are different now. We are in a new environment and we need a new approach.” Over the time that I have been at the Wellness Centre, I have witnessed a number of changes to management and to organizational approach. The Wellness Centre was opened officially on December 12 2011, although it had been operational for the preceding year. While there are a number of services on offer at the Wellness Centre, from eye testing to aromatherapy, the primary activity that takes place here is a health and nutrition training programme. I divided my attention between the staff that run this training programme and the Masincediswe Seniors’ Club. Tabita and Ma’Monica are the two trainers at the running the programme here and elsewhere. Lulama coordinates the training programme and the nutrition programmes of Ikamva Labantu more broadly. Lulu is an aromatherapist who used to spend many days at the centre but towards the middle of 2012 she has rotated between the various Seniors’ Clubs and isn’t around as often anymore. Ma’Monica is the oldest of the four women. She has a large family and is famous for her vegetable soup. Lulama is a registered dietician and passionate Christian whose participation in this research eased between conversations with me and praying for me. Lulu is blind and maintains that the strangest question a university student ever asked her was whether she could see the dark. Tabby is a single mother, proud of her “good boy” who started high school this year. She is also studying, completing her postgraduate diploma in Adult Education at the University of the Western Cape. Three men had a peripheral role in my research. Keith is a retired doctor who volunteered here in 2011, Lubabalo is the facilities manager and Champion is the garden monitor. Tabby and Lulu’s voices are heard most in the text, and it is my friendship with Tabita that informed the research and the text in a number of other ways.

The Masincediswe Seniors’ Club has a core of seven to ten women and at various points in the year has members of up to twenty-five to thirty women, with the occasional man also participating in the club.² Their clubhouse is located in a small bungalow in the garden of the Wellness Centre. They meet everyday to bead and to sew and also, as they tell me, to get out of the house and be busy. They explain that they like coming here because they work better together and cannot work like this at home: there are too many grandchildren at home, too many worries. Regina Kalako, Ma’Regina, founded the club in 1994. She went from house to house knocking on doors and collecting women. She collected 36 women then and while most of them no longer come regularly, she is still in touch with them. Ma’Sarah is the club secretary and records the daily activities of the club in a black hardcover book. Ma’Sophie is the most skilled beader and is often handed projects to

² I have referred to the Seniors’ Club as ‘*mamas/mas*’ (plural of *mama/ma*: an older women, mother or grandmother) and ‘women’ interchangeably in this text, as they are both. When it has felt to me that I am talking about them through my relationship with them, I have called them *mas*, and when I have felt that someone without our relationship could make that same point, I have called them women. Please see Chapter Three for an explanation of how I came to call them *mas*.

fix. Ma'Ellen and Ma'Javana are the other members of the club's organizing committee. Ma'Noms and Ma'Christine are frequent visitors. These women, who I came to call my *mas*, spent many hours and many days talking to me, teaching me how to knit and to sew, and caring for me. After a few months of talking, teaching and caring, they came to call me Thandeka, which means adorable or lovable in Xhosa. It is through their immense care, their warmth and their kindness that I came to be a loved one in the bungalow.

I arrived at Ikamva Labantu through UCT's Learning Network. The Learning Network is a consortium of university units and civil society organizations that carries out collaborative research, training and advocacy to the benefit of the civil society partners. UCT's School of Public Health is the primary university partner in the Learning Network, and they gave me a broad research brief to investigate the manifestation and role of power in knowledge production partnerships between various bodies within the Learning Network. While proposed by the School of Public Health and the Learning Network, I was supervised by two anthropologists at UCT. Moving through these institutions and organizations with me has been Ziyanda Ndzendze. Ziyanda graduated with her honours degree in Social Anthropology in December 2012, and is also a resident of Site B, Khayelitsha; her family home is a two-minute drive from the Wellness Centre. Officially, her role has been that of research assistant. Ziyanda came to the Wellness Centre at least twice a week. She translated for me, but in many instances she had her own conversations with people that she would tell me about on our drives home. She joined me in reflecting on the research and offered honest and usable critique. Part of the reason why her presence and input was so valuable was that I knew her (I first met her when she was in high school) and trusted her analysis and advice completely. Roger Sanjek's critique (1993) on the historical undervaluing and underappreciating of research assistants in anthropology includes an explanation of how this traditional undervaluing has resulted in several challenges with regard to acknowledging the contributions that research assistants make throughout the ethnographic process. This text will hopefully make clear to the reader my dependence on Ziyanda's knowledge, critiques and support.

A note on research method

Every chapter in this dissertation comments on research method, nonetheless, I want to preface that commentary with a very brief summary of the theoretical foundations of my research. My research is mostly captured under the broad umbrella terms of 'ethnography' (particularly collaborative and feminist ethnography) and 'community-based participatory research'. I do elaborate in the chapters that follow on the particular activities and ideologies of each I embraced, and those that I rejected. As others have argued (Camacho, 2004: 32; Hurtig, 2008: 102; and McQuiston et al, 2005) and as I experienced in my own empirical work, anthropology, with its

ethnographic methods, lends itself to linkages with community-based participatory research—and other research fields with a focus on community engagement—because of similarities in methods and ideological approach and particularly in their shared avoidance of engagement with communities as “objects of gaze” (Camacho, 2004: 31). For example, there are some practices that are characteristic of both engaged scholarship and anthropology, like groups of academics working with each other and with individuals from outside of the university on joint projects (Austin, 2003: 147), or the location of research in its larger social context (Boyer, 1996: 16). In terms of the kinds of academic partners that community partners have reported appreciating in collaborative projects, they could just as well be describing sensitive anthropologists: “partners willing to spend time getting to know that community, listening to community voices, respecting cultural values and practices and sharing resources and knowledge in ways that are useful and relevant to community initiatives and interests” (Holland and Ramaley, 2008: 35). This is not to say that anthropology and community-based participatory research are synonymous, or that they are the only research approaches that practice these methods. Rather, it suggests that it in the context of my own research experience, I found that there is a complementary relationship between these various bodies of literature and practice associated respectively with anthropology/ethnography and with community-based participatory research.

The nature of my research has required me to be reflexive and to this end I have also drawn on experiential learning theorists who write about the importance of critical reflection and transformative learning. I have borrowed too from the field of service-learning, particularly when exploring organizational dynamics, notions of reciprocity, and relationship building between people from different socio-economic backgrounds. While not informing explicit methods, Paulo Freire’s philosophies on liberation and education (1968, 2004) have offered me an overarching point of reference in almost every aspect of my research. Some of the primary methods proposed across all of these fields and disciplines include:

- Generating a sensitivity to existing micro- and macro-level dynamics of power
- Interrogating the identity of self as much as of others
- Foregrounding the politics of research in designing and carrying out research
- Sharing of self and own context and knowledge to increase understanding between research recipients and to encourage reciprocal flows of knowledge
- Developing a understanding of how the research intentions and priorities of all involved complement and contrast one another
- In writing this dissertation, I drew on two additional methods in the literature: writing *from* the field, and writing contemporaneously with practice. I detail both in Chapter Five, for now it is only necessary to know that much of this text was written at the Wellness Centre,

and it was written at the same time as other research activities.

While I expand on all of the above themes at various points in this dissertation, to begin an explanation of my method I have outlined below some of what constituted my research processes. It is difficult to define each research process by a question or set of activities or outputs, as these changed several times over the course of my time at the Wellness Centre. It is far easier to define the groups with whom I researched. Of these, there were three.

1. Trainee group

As I explained in the above section, the primary activity run at the Wellness Centre is a nine-week Health and Nutrition training programme led by Tabby and Ma'Monica. Participants in the training programme are drawn from one of the three branches of Ikamva Labantu's work: Early Childhood Development, Orphan and Vulnerable Children, and Senior Citizens. About two weeks into my research, Tabby came to me over lunch-time to tell me there was a group of trainee women here who I could talk to and asked: "are you interested?" Over the next five weeks, I spent time with these women. They could not speak English and I could not speak Xhosa so Tabs translated that first week and then Ziyanda took over. They identified certain research questions in which they were interested—I discuss these in Chapter Two—and we devised a research plan together. However, when it came to enacting the plan, the women lost interest. They were late for our meetings and then they stopped coming. Ziyanda tried phoning but could not reach them or get a firm commitment from them. The research plan we had designed was a collaborative one, with the women, Ziyanda, and I going together to talk to relevant people. There were elements of the research with which I was tasked, elements requiring an internet connection, a car and all kinds of cultural capital unavailable to the women. To my knowledge, the only parts of the research projects we designed that were completed were the sections that they gave me to do.

As others report, (Sullivan et al, 2001: 143), a problem with collaborative or participatory research is that participants are busy, they have their own agendas and things to do, and research participation might take time away from the priorities of their lives. In light of the reality that Sullivan et al describe, there is a number of potential reasons why my attempt at collaborative ethnography did not work, and I discuss these in the chapters that follow. What is important to note for now is that this attempt to carry out collaborative, engaged and contextually sensitive research embodied much of what is outlined in the literature for collaborative ethnography, from ideological approach to the activities and tasks planned. I return to that literature and how it resonated with my own experiences in the chapters that follow.

2. *Enkululekweni Wellness Centre Staff*

While my attempts at research with the trainee group followed a traditional model of research guided by a research question, my research with the Wellness Centre staff is better characterized as a model guided by information or knowledge needs—for both them and me. We never designed formal research questions; rather, we would ask each other how to do something, or why something is as it is. We generated knowledge and answers to these questions through conversations and through activities. While I have recorded much of the knowledge generated through these processes, it is knowledge for my own or their own epistemic edification. Some of the issues we talked about, like the role of religion in development work, or the difference between helping people as a manifestation of *ubuntu*—the philosophy of human connectedness, which I explain in Chapter Three—or helping them as part of a development agenda, could very easily be turned into a university research project leading to a dissertation. Just because our information and knowledge needs were not articulated in a way that might produce outcomes in dissertation form, it does not mean that research—involving reading, talking, reflecting and writing—did not happen. Furthermore, just as there can be knowledge that has little relevance or use outside of a university context, there is other knowledge that has little relevancy and use inside of a university context (Schratz and Walker, 1998: 200). But again, this does not mean that relevant and useful knowledge was not generated. The other primary research activity in which we engaged was joint reflection on and analysis of my research attempts with the trainee group and the Masincediswe Seniors' Club.

In addition to my research activities with the Wellness Centre staff, I complemented my methods with activities associated with what volunteers do in a space like Ikamva. I made posters, chopped carrots for Ma'Monica's soup, decanted and ordered aromatherapy oils, and designed the vegetable displays for the centre health days.

3. *Masincediswe Seniors' Club*

After the failure of my first attempt to do collaborative research with the trainee group, Tabs introduced me to the women of the Masincediswe Seniors' Club. With Ziyanda's guidance—I discuss her input in Chapter Three at length—I changed my strategy. I abandoned the activities of collaborative ethnography and embraced instead the ethic of care, which is foundational to feminist ethnography. From the first day I met these women, things were different to what they had been in my attempt with the trainee group, despite their backgrounds being very similar. The primary variable that changed between these two instances was my approach and the relationships that I nurtured with the Seniors' Club members. They told me, that first day, after hearing about me and my research and what I wanted to do, that “don't worry we'll help you.” As I discuss in later chapters, from the outset our relationship was defined as a group of *mas* (elderly women, who are

mothers and grandmothers) helping and teaching two *ntombezanas* (young women, who are daughters and sisters). I never had a relationship with them that could be appropriately described in terms like informant.

After spending a few days with them and discussing a number of community issues and questions that they had, I realised that what they liked talking about most was their lives: life in the Eastern Cape, life in Khayelitsha, their families, their hobbies. Similarly, what they liked listening to most were stories about my life: my friend's wedding, my brother's new job, and the patchwork quilt my mom and I made. So I offered to write down their stories and they loved the idea. Writing life histories became our collaborative research. However, over weeks and months, we stopped telling stories for the purpose of writing life histories. They told stories to teach me things and to show me how things have changed. They listened to my stories and heard about my friends and family so that they could be involved in my life: one of the photos stuck to their fridge is of me and two of my friends punting in England. Some of their own children and grandchildren have died, they don't hear from some of the others very often. My point is that while we started off doing research together, at some point I stopped taking my notebook into the bungalow.

The component of my presence at the Wellness Centre that involved what would be recognized as research ended roughly nine to ten months after I had first started here. By December 2012, seventeen months later, I have a more ambiguous relationship with the Wellness Centre and Seniors' Club, as is discussed in the chapters that follow.

To close off this brief discussion on research method, I want to offer a short note on quotes and fieldnotes.

I asked Tabby and Ma'Monica which bus they thought I should take from Claremont to the Centre. The discussion grew into a debate about the attitudes of taxi drivers and whether driving a taxi really is a stressful job. Then we moved back to bus routes. Then we talked about excel because Tabs actually only had half her attention on the conversation and the other half on the attendance register in front of her, and then we got back to the 'Village 3' bus. Eventually, Ma'Monica concludes, "the Makhaza bus, you should take the Makhaza bus."

The above extract from my fieldnotes was characteristic of many of the conversations I had whilst at the Wellness Centre. Not every sentence was relevant to my questions and very often the one line that I wanted to include in this text would come after and before others that were irrelevant, confusing, contradictory. But to take that one line and use it as data, ignoring everything else, seemed to me that I was using my conversations and conversational partners as a means to a my own ends. Therefore, in writing this dissertation, I have lengthened quotes beyond what is necessary to make the point I use the quote to make. I have included parts of quotes that do not

relate directly to the point being made. I have done that because they were part of a greater conversation that swung between topics. I have also included parts of quotes that allow the reader to see something of the personality of the speaker: Lulu has a great sense of humour, Tabby always has a Plan B, a Plan C and is plotting a Plan D. They are real people whose quotes are embedded in their personalities. To bring their voice into this text, I must bring a part of them too.

Lastly, for many people quoted in this text, story-telling was the medium through which they communicated their ideas and feelings to me. Those stories were often circuitous routes through what *they* wanted to say, not what *I* wanted to hear. I hope that my interpretations and analysis make it clear to the reader the parts of the quotes that relate to my arguments. If this not always the case, I invite the reader to forget my argument and appreciate instead the person behind the quote.

TWO: AN ASPIRATIONAL MODEL OF ENGAGEMENT

“We can no longer afford to live with the comforting illusion that we act upon the world in socially just ways simply by inscribing and cataloguing the many cases in which justice is absent.” (Dyrness: 2008: 23)

In this chapter, I sketch the model of engaged research to which I aspired in the present empirical work, focusing particularly on the social justice values around which the model is oriented. I want to make clear from the outset that it is a model informed by a number of other models proposed in the literature on community engagement, engaged scholarship, community based research, and anthropology. It does not belong to any one discipline but rather borrows from many. As such its coherence—or lack thereof—is something of my own making. The messiness, sometimes inconsistency, and sporadic shifts in thinking and design are a result of embracing a reflective research method based on an action learning cycle that oscillates between action, reflection and further action informed by that reflection (Taylor et al, 1997). As my own research practice continues to evolve, so too does the model to which I hold that practice accountable. Therefore, what I have outlined below is very much a work in progress and a work on which I will continue to reflect and change as I continue to practice. The way I have articulated my model of engaged research is to look at the ideals and aspirations of engaged research in various contexts—higher education, South Africa, the University of Cape Town—and start to assign methods or activities to those ideals and aspirations. I continue to translate the model into practice in the following chapters, so this chapter builds only the foundations of the model; it does not capture it in its entirety.

While the terms ‘engaged scholarship’ and ‘community engagement’ are used to describe activities of universities around the world, the model of engaged research that I applied in this instance is grounded in South Africa, and at the University of Cape Town. Therefore, my discussion below responds to engaged research in this context. It is a model that is aligned with South Africa’s national agenda of post-apartheid transformation and as such has an overt social justice orientation. Social justice is defined very differently across and within disciplines. For my purposes, I use social justice to refer to the fair distribution of goods and burdens within society (Miller, 1999: Chapter 1; Goodin and Petit, 1993: 174; and Raphael, 2001: 198-199) as well as to the abilities of all individuals to utilize goods to their maximum potential and to negotiate the minimal impact of burdens (Sen, 1999: 75). This latter ability can also be understood as an individual having agency to dictate the course of their life and the lives of their dependents. Similarly, the meaning of ‘transformation’ differs according to the larger discourse in which it is employed. However, in South Africa there is general agreement that social transformation refers to shifts away from

apartheid and apartheid legacies of inequality, injustice, oppression etc. (Reddy, 2007: 209-210). The last section of this chapter returns to the definition of these two terms and the salience of that (under)definition in my research.³

While I begin this chapter by relating social justice and transformation to some of the higher education policy directives in South Africa that are relevant to a discussion on engagement, I first outline the global movement to which ‘engaged scholarship’ refers. Cooper (2009, 2011) offers a history of engaged scholarship—in a form akin to the dominant models of engagement practiced today—commencing in the course of the 1970s technological revolution. During this time, industrial institutions, like pharmaceutical and IT companies, added to their ambit of activities knowledge production (commonly in the shape of ‘Research and Development’ departments), and in so doing pressured universities—previously the sole conventional sites of knowledge production—to engage with industry in novel ways (Cooper, 2009: 23). At the same time, many universities were engaged in knowledge production projects with government, and thus, what is called the “triple-helix” of university-industry-government engagement was formed (2009). The emergence of what is known as the “third mission” of universities—a mission of socio-economic development—added further impetus for collaboration between university, industry and government (Cooper, 2009). The third mission of universities also necessitated the development of a fourth strand of the helix: engagement with civil society (Cooper, 2011). While South African national higher education legislation and the institutional policies of UCT cover all three strands of engagement, as my research pertains to the third strand, the engagement on which I concentrate here is that of the university with civil society.

As I stated above, I start this chapter by arguing that national higher education legislation and policy are characteristic of South Africa’s national project of social transformation. I offer some socio-historical context as an explanation for why higher education policy is designed the way it is. I then focus my discussion on the University of Cape Town’s institutional policies regarding engagement. I show that national and institutional policy—whether offering direct or implicit reference to engaged research—construct certain ideals to which individuals within higher education institutions are expected to aspire and enact. I build on this discussion in the second half of the chapter and in the following two chapters by questioning whether and how the aspirations and goals ascribed to engaged research can be met. I close this chapter by arguing that while there is a clear aspiration for engaged research to be social justice oriented and to contribute to social

³ For the time being, I use the terms social justice, social transformation and common good interchangeably. My analysis in this chapter will make the use of these terms clear. I use the term (under)definition to refer to the inadequate ways in which these concepts are understood.

transformation, there are two obstacles to achieving this goal: an individual researcher has limited capacity to achieve macro-level social change, and social justice and transformation are not clearly enough defined in policy to make it apparent what each involve, therefore making it impossible for the researcher to know whether they have achieved this particular goal. For ethnographic evidence, I use the two research questions proposed by a trainee group at the Wellness Centre as data that illustrate how these two obstacles arise.

Higher Education in South Africa

University engagement with civil society, or the synonymous term: ‘community engagement’, is, in South Africa, at least partly symptomatic of post-apartheid shifts in national legislation and is “promoted as part of broader attempts to transform South African universities in a post-apartheid context” (Matthews, 2010: 5). Like almost all of South Africa’s post-apartheid legislation, higher education legislation and policy is aligned to the three foundational values of the constitution: equality, freedom and human dignity. Karl Klare’s phrase “transformative constitutionalism” describes the translation of constitutional values into national legislation and he argues that the transformation of political and social institutions—including higher education institutions—in a “democratic, participatory and egalitarian direction” is embedded in these constitutional values (Klare, 1998: 150). Policy and law like Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997), as well as The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, and the National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa (2001) are illustrative of intentions to achieve democratic, participatory and egalitarian shifts in legislation and demonstrate the South African government’s commitment to redress and transformation *in and through* education.

Ernest Boyer, educationalist and early campaigner for the scholarship of engagement, argued that higher education institutions (HEIs) have a historic record of increased contributions to state and society in times of “urgent national endeavour” (1996: 11). I can identify two primary contributions that the Department of Education expects HEIs to make to South Africa’s national endeavour of social transformation. First, White Paper 3 proposes that HEIs should produce graduates who are able to address societal needs through equipping students with the expertise they require to bring about socio-economic development (DoE, 1007: Section 1.3). Ideally, what is described as the “Programme and Qualification Mix” of each institution should, as outlined by the DoE, reflect what are called “the developmental labour needs of the country” (DoE, 1997: Section 1.4). The second contribution concerns the role that HEIs have to play in building a critical civil society, through producing graduates who have a “[strong] democratic ethos, sense of common citizenship and commitment to a common good” (DoE, 1997: Section 1.4). Simplified, the first of these contributions refers to the knowledge and skills with which graduates leave higher education; the

second refers to the values, or consciousness that they develop over the course of their studies. The goal to foster a “critically constructive citizenry” reflects the use of higher education in many global democracies (Luescher-Mamashela et al, 2011: ix).

I return to the above discussion in the second half of this chapter, after introducing a complementary set of ideas that offer some explanation of why higher education in post-apartheid South Africa has been constructed as it has. If one accepts the thesis that “universities are implicated in the politics of the communities in which they work” (Kassam and Tettey, 2003: 170), then it is useful to explore the politics to which South African universities—particularly the University of Cape Town—respond. I highlight in brief three points below to support my argument: (i) the structural inaccessibility of higher education to historically marginalized South Africans, (ii) the perceived inhospitality of higher education institutions to these citizens, and (iii) the misplaced equation of formal education with knowledge and competency.⁴

(i) The University of Cape Town is South Africa’s highest-ranked university⁵, and like many good universities, it is unfortunately characterized by its inaccessibility (Quinn, 2005: 5). Its inaccessibility has historical roots. The Extension of University Education Act (No 45 of 1959) mandated that previously racially open universities, including UCT, were no longer allowed to register black students without special permission (Christie, 2009: 233). The racial demographics of UCT started to be more representative of South Africa’s citizenship in the 1980s, and today around 50% of the student body is black⁶. While UCT is, on paper, accessible to any South Africa matriculant⁷ who meets the university’s eligibility criteria⁸, the reality is such that the social and economic barriers to higher education in South Africa are impenetrable for a large portion of South

⁴ While formal education arguably offers many avenues of learning, I do not believe it is within the scope of this dissertation to engage to what extent different kinds of learning occur in formal educational environments. It is perfectly adequate in this instance to equate formal education with formal learning. Formal learning can be differentiated from informal and nonformal learning in a number of ways. Formal accredited learning takes place within an institutional context. In contrast, nonformal learning is unaccredited and does not take place within an academic institution, although learning can still be fairly structured: a workshop series or training programme for example. Informal learning is unstructured and unintentional. (Boud and Walker, 1990: 61, Marsick and Watkins, 2001: 25)

⁵ UCT is the highest ranked university in South Africa and Africa on all major global ranking systems (Shanghai, Times, QS World Rankings etc). These systems vary in their criteria to a certain degree, but research output is always included, whether privileging the natural or social sciences. While I do not endorse these ranking systems, the fact remains that UCT holds the highest position on all of them.

⁶ Black is used as an umbrella term here to cover three of the four races that UCT recognizes on its application forms: black, coloured and Indian.

⁷ In South Africa, at the end of Grade 12, learners write a set of exams, colloquially described as “matric exams”. Learners who write these exams are called matriculants.

⁸ While eligibility criteria differ across the university, to be admitted to a Bachelor’s Degree programme, applicants must attain 50% in at least four National Senior Certificate (NSC) subjects (the passing grade is 30%). Applicants must also have achieved at least 30% in English on the NSC. (uct.ac.za/apply/criteria/eligibility)

African high school students (Bloch, 2009: 86-87). Thus, in terms of controlling access to higher education, structural inequalities can be as restrictive as exclusionary legislation. For example, in Khayelitsha—the township in which my research has been based—around 1 500 – 2 000 learners from 20 secondary schools in the area pass their matric exams every year (Clarke, 2011: presentation at the People’s Summit for Quality Education). Of these approximately 2 000 learners, only 20 gained admission to UCT in 2012 (Price, 2012: presentation at the UCT Schools Improvement Initiative). Stories like Lulu’s articulate the problem:

My friend's child finished matric but can't go to university. She is young and brilliant, but her mother is depending on a grant and doesn't earn much from her aromatherapy. And if you take out a student loan you will have a lifetime account. I would love my children to go to university; it would open more opportunities for them. There are a lot of kids who want to go but can't. They don't know where to knock, they don't know where to get help. I also wanted to study but then I didn't get a bursary. And our parents don't know themselves; you're on your own, especially in those days.

(ii) As a public institution, UCT has legal obligations to fulfil, but it has too a historical reputation of inaccessibility, exclusion and elitism to challenge. This reputation or perception of inaccessibility can be a contributing factor to the reality that HEIs and communities cannot always find productive ways to work together immediately (Holland and Ramaley, 2008: 36), with universities often needing to “break down the myth of the university and the intimidating atmosphere associated with it” (Kassam and Tettey, 2003: 171). As Bloch (2009) argues in *The Toxic Mix*, there is more wrong with the South African schooling and education system than what is attributed to the legacy of apartheid, but it is this legacy of unwelcoming inaccessibility that is often embedded in the memories of parents and grandparents who want their children to go to university, or who want to go to university themselves. When Tabby and Ma’Monica initially applied for the Diploma in Adult Education, they would wait for me to come to the office to call the administrative staff at UWC (University of the Western Cape) to follow-up on their applications as they did not know how to speak to the university administrators and could not understand what they were told even when spoken to in Xhosa, their first language. They were particularly concerned about the delay between applying for the programme and hearing whether they were accepted. Their applications had gone in and they had not yet received a response. It was not clear to them whether this meant that they had not been admitted, or that the university was still processing their application. I would call and repeat verbatim what was told to me while on the line with the administrator, and the questions that Tabita and Ma’Monica asked the administrator through me made it clear that they understood. Knowing how to engage with the university on an institutional level makes it an easier place to access. The perception of inaccessibility, and of not being welcome at an institution, can be as meaningful as the reality of inaccessibility: perception is a real barrier.

Therefore, in the context of post-apartheid South Africa, universities like UCT—being committed to community engagement—have much to do when it comes to challenging their reputation as unapproachable, unfriendly and inaccessible. What I heard from a number of the people at the Wellness Centre is that UCT seems to have a stronger reputation than other higher education institutions in this regard. For example,

Tabby and I are drinking tea in the kitchen, watching Ma'Monica stir her soup, humming quietly to herself. I had asked Tabita whether she thought universities were exclusive, or approachable.

"No, the university is approachable" she tells me over her mug of tea. "It's the individuals who come from them who aren't."

"The individuals?" I ask her, "What do you mean?"

"Yes, like the OT [occupational therapy] students from UCT. I didn't see the point of them being here. They were trying to be supervisors," Tabby laughs a bit as she shakes her head and continues, "Everyday they were interviewing and scrutinizing and not being helpful. They were *reserved*." She emphasizes the last word to highlight her disapproval.

I nod to her to continue, but she doesn't need encouragement, she continues to talk as I continue to take notes.

"I felt that these people were from the university and they were not approachable. The students from UWC were willing to help and I could learn from them. Not like the other students where it was them sitting there, waiting for me to do something wrong so that they could intervene."

An emphatic, "mmm", an emphatic pause. "Yes," Tabby agrees with herself, "you need to be down to earth so that people can approach you," she pauses again.

"And they weren't." I finish.

She pulls an almost comical "no" face. I smile back.

There are a number of differences between UWC and UCT, not least of which is their geographical location. UWC is off one end of the long and winding Modderdam Road, the other end of which circles round into the township of Gugulethu, one of Khayelitsha's neighbours. The campus is built low and almost out of sight in the historically coloured Cape Flats. In contrast, UCT sits high on the slopes of Devil's Peak for all to see. The university is located in the affluent southern suburbs, on land donated by infamous colonizer and builder of empire, Cecil John Rhodes. Peirano (1998: 113) echoes a refrain in feminist ethnography when she argues that research sites are "political locations", not just spatial sites. In Cape Town, space or geography *is* political. As I discussed in the introduction, the eastern band of the city, of which the Cape Flats are a part, was historically marginalized and, consequently, is currently poor. Thus, UCT's physical location is both literally and metaphorically indicative of its historical inaccessibility, and unfortunately, for the existing elitist attitudes of some of its students if Tabby's reflections are to be trusted.

Contributing to the two institutions' geographical differences, are their socio-historical ones. UWC is a historically coloured university, where UCT is historically white (Mdepa and Tshiwula, 2012: 21;

Rohelder et al, 2008: 256). In 2006 the Higher Education Quality Committee's institutional audit of UCT reported a disjuncture between the continued whiteness of the institution and the institution's aspirations of transformation, including the racial transformation of students and staff (DoE, 2008: 50). This is not to say that UCT is a racist institution. It has a long history of anti-racism during apartheid, particularly in relation to higher education legislation. However, a white liberal history on its own is not sufficient to create a reputation of hospitality and inclusion, particularly to those who were previously excluded from the university community. In contrast, UWC was established in 1960 as a university for people designated 'coloured' under apartheid classifications. In 1982, the university "rejected the apartheid ideology on which it had been founded" through implementing a number of pedagogical and management strategies grounded in ideals of freedom and equality (UWC, 2009). Unlike UCT, UWC has long been accessible to coloured and black residents of Cape Town.

All of these factors contribute to how each institution is understood and given the histories and geographies of each; the perceived exclusivity and inaccessibility of UCT is understandable. UCT seems aware of and has started to respond to this perception, as evident for example in Goal Two of the Strategic Goals, specifically sub-strategy three, titled: "Inclusiveness: UCT as a place that is 'owned' by all its staff and students, and by the community" (2009: Goal Two). I explain in Chapter Three that there is more that the institution needs to do in order to translate policy into action and to challenge its perceived exclusiveness.

(iii) About two weeks into my fieldwork I had a conversation with someone at the Wellness Centre that illustrated how ubiquitous the equation of formal education with intelligence and competency is in South Africa. We were chatting about my research and he warned me about trying to collaborate with community members because, while in the university there might be "clever" people, here in the community, I was going to struggle to find, what he called, "useful" knowledge for my university research. It is this perception that I met, time and time again, at the Wellness Centre. When Ma'Regina taught me how to knit and I sat knitting away in neat rows and the other women commented on how I'm a quick-learner, Ma'Regina replied that it is because I'm from the university. When someone had a question in the office, someone else would suggest that they ask me for the answer because of my university-educated "academic mind", despite my not having any proven competence in the content area of their question.

There are two reasons for this equation that I found in my research. The first, which I discuss in Chapters Four and Five, is the historical racialization of knowledge and education and the conflation of whiteness, education and intelligence. Very superficially, the point is just that formal

education, particularly higher education, has been historically almost exclusively the privilege of white people. This was defended by the apartheid state through the argument—evident in legislation like the Bantu Education Act of 1953—that black people were not intelligent enough to cope with the academic demands of formal education (Christie, 2009: Chapter Five). Thus, an opinion was created that only intelligent people receive formal higher education, which leads to the conclusion that only white people are intelligent. It is the persistence of this opinion that contributes to the equation of formal education with intelligence and competence today.

The second contributing factor is the ever-increasing commodification of knowledge, evident in the growing number of private sector education institutions in South Africa. This commodification places a heavy instrumentalist value on education (Bawa, 2003: 51). This means that education, as a commodity, must have *use* to the consumer, and use that generates a return on a financial investment. The use of formal and certified education, as purported by private sector higher education institutions, is that it makes the consumer intelligent, competent and employable, as evidenced by the excerpts of three of Cape Town’s largest private, and even some non-private, higher education institutions’ marketing materials below:

Our objective is to give learners an advantage by preparing them for the workplace. Giving learners employable skills, and an all round education, which will make them invaluable to any employer.
Boston College (Accessed 05.12.2012: <http://www.boston.co.za/>)

[Our] philosophy of academic excellence, combined with the application of essential business tools and skills, can be implemented in the work environment. This puts us, we believe, in a position to offer you qualifications that will develop and prepare you for a future filled with many opportunities.
Varsity College (Accessed 05.12.2012: <http://www.varsitycollege.co.za/>)

The College strives to provide high-quality education and training to help you equip yourself with the qualifications and skills you need to start out on a chosen career path.
College of Cape Town (Accessed 05.12.2012: <http://www.cct.edu.za/>)

While national higher education legislation may have a strong social justice and public good orientation, the overwhelming message emanating from the higher education sector more broadly is that a formal qualification—represented by a certificate—makes one a smarter and especially competent person. Like diet pills that make the consumer slimmer, or breakfast cereals that make the consumer bouncier, equating formal education with intelligence and competence might not necessarily be an accurate reflection of the product being sold, but that inaccuracy does not detract from the popular perception of the product. Therefore, people like me, who have been educated at institutions like UCT, can be perceived to be more intelligent and more competent than people who have never been able to access opportunities in formal education. In Chapter Four I engage in a deeper analysis of the politics of knowing and of being a knower, and continue this discussion then.

The three factors discussed above—the structural inaccessibility of higher education, the perceived

inhospitality of higher education institutions, and the equation of intellect with formal education—contribute to the environment to which higher education policy responds. When read in parallel to the policy directives of the University of Cape Town below, these three factors add to an explanation of why these policies are designed with explicit transformation agendas that take into account historical injustices in formal higher education in South Africa.

University (of Cape Town) – Community Engagement

Over the last few years, the University of Cape Town has made a concerted effort to introduce and to develop community engagement at all of levels of the institution. The human and financial capital channelled into this arm of the university’s operations has increased, and staff and students are encouraged and incentivized—in various ways—to engage with communities. The institutional commitment to community engagement is illustrated in, and outlined by, the Social Responsiveness Policy (2008), as well as the Strategies for Change (2010). It is a commitment that extends beyond the classroom in that issues of access and inclusion are given as much attention as more traditional academic practices like research and teaching. UCT’s strategies governing engagement cover “academic” and “civic” initiatives, where “academic” refers to engaged teaching, learning and research, and “civic” refers to engagement that has no direct links to the formal curriculum (UCT SR Policy, 2008: 3).

Proponents of the engaged scholarship movement—one of the academic foundations of this research—argue that what UCT calls “civic engagement” should not be the preferred kind of engagement practiced by HEIs, as members of the university community have niche competencies to share, competencies linked to their academic work (Cooper, 2011: 8; Holland et al, 2010: 25; Holland and Ramaley, 2008: 39; Oldfield, 2007: 105). Therefore I focus my discussion on policy references to *academic* engagement, specifically research. UCT’s Social Responsiveness (SR) Policy defines social responsiveness as engagement with *external* constituencies. This definition fails to take into consideration the on-campus groups and members of the university who might face some of the same challenges as those outside of the university. It also fails to realize the individuals can belong to multiple communities simultaneously. For example a UCT student can also be a resident of an underserved informal settlement. Following the logic of the SR policy, if engagement with such a student is to be socially responsive, then that engagement must be with the student in their capacity as a resident of that settlement, which seems a semantic and unnecessary complication. The exclusion of university constituents is one of the more problematic aspects of the SR Policy and has seen resistance from some in the greater university community, particularly from students

engaged in on-campus peer support initiatives.⁹ However, when describing the kind of engaged research that is socially responsive: “collaborative research involving active participation of external constituencies” (2008: Section 2.2), the institutional insistence on participation from external constituents is important. Collaboration in the academy is often between academics, either within or across institutions. The “external constituencies” condition encourages the participation of non-academic collaborators in the research process, thereby recognizing the valuable role that external collaborators have the potential to play. The SR policy also identifies a number of engagement activities, which echo many of the practices and ideals identified in engaged scholarship and national policy, including: multi-directional flows of knowledge, recognition of all collaborators’ contributions, and engagement from a basis of trust (2008: Section 2.3). These three points lend credence to an interpretation that, embedded in the research practice championed by institutional policy, is a strong recognition of the value of collaboration and reciprocity. I return to this point on reciprocity in Chapter Five.

The SR policy includes under its banner of socially engaged research, research that has both an epistemic and “intentional public purpose” and research as an exercise that addresses “practical problems or challenges” (2008: Section 2.2). While all research will have some impact on the “real world” (Bawa, 2003: 52), the first point here asks that public purpose be included intentionally in the conceptualizing and planning of research. The second point articulates a stronger request: that research projects address a practical issue and, presumably, that they come up with practical solutions. UCT’s ‘Strategies for Change’ document (2010) reflects a similar set of interests in social justice and transformation. For example, Goal Six (Expanding and Enhancing UCT’s Contribution to South Africa’s Development Challenges) mirrors national higher education policy priorities and reaffirms the commitment of the university to contribute to social transformation in South Africa—this is the first aspiration or goal of engaged research included in this text and the second half of this chapter deals with two potential obstacles to achieving this goal.

In addition to the social transformation aspiration of the university’s policies relating to community engagement, Goal Two of UCT’s Strategic Goals (Transformation of UCT Towards Non-Racialism: Redress, Diversity, Inclusiveness and the Recognition of African Voices) articulates an imperative to strengthen relationships with external constituencies that were historically excluded from UCT. This is to challenge perceptions that UCT is “either beyond their reach or too inhospitable” (2009: Goal Two). The SR Policy outlines that engaged research spaces that are open to non-university groups and individuals should be welcoming and supportive, in order to “minimise the effects of unequal power relations” between those from the university and their external collaborators (2008:

⁹ Students in Social Responsiveness discussion group (20 July 2012)

Section 2.3). It is to the university's credit that those in leadership acknowledge and want to challenge the reputation of higher education institutions as closed spaces. The drive for inclusionary engagement is reflected again in Goal Four. As the title of Goal Four suggests: "A Vision for the Development of Research at UCT: Greater Impact, Greater Engagement", this goal prioritizes extended and intense engagement with research communities. Proposing more than socially relevant research, the goal also articulates a desire to "earn the respect of the community [that the university] serves" (2009: Goal Four), thus supporting the imperative to build relationships with communities that extend beyond problem-solving initiatives. It is an aspirational imperative reiterated at several points, both explicitly and implicitly in the Strategies for Change and SR Policy. This 'relationship building' goal is the second of the three aspirations of engaged research addressed in this paper and I explore it more fully in Chapter Three.

As a related point, Goal Six (Expanding and Enhancing UCT's Contribution to South Africa's Development Challenges) outlines a belief that "the complexity of many of the challenges facing our country necessitates collaboration with multiple stakeholders" (2009: Goal Six). In addition, the University encourages "social innovation" in research (2009: Goal Four) and I believe that innovation in this case includes not only the content of research, but also *how* research is carried out. It is perhaps a generous interpretation of UCT's strategic goals to come to the following conclusion, but intentional or not, I read in the goals an acceptance that collaboration—including building relationships with community partners—and producing scholarly outputs can be mutually supporting. To illustrate this point: I was told in many independent conversations at the Wellness Centre that researchers could be "suspicious" individuals. Lulu and Tabs explained that people are suspicious of researchers because "if you just ask someone a question, people will ask you, 'why do you want to know that?'" It is important, as Lulu maintains, "to be friends first." Thus, by being friends, or through accepting that nurturing relationships is an integral component of a research method, a comfortable research environment that enables participation can be created. Greater participation, as I discuss later, results in richer data, which in turn can result in a stronger scholarly output. I explore the connections between research outputs and relationships in greater detail in Chapter Three.

Finally, Goal Two makes visible an acknowledgment of, and will to change, traditional knowledge hierarchies. This epistemic goal is the third of the three aspirations of engaged research that I include in this dissertation and I will address it comprehensively in Chapter Four. Briefly, the goal states that students "gain an understanding of how ways of thinking and bodies of knowledge may be embedded in historical power relations", and how African worldviews have been undermined by Eurocentric approaches to knowledge and to belief systems (2009). Further, Goal Two stipulates

that, as a challenge to the dominant voices that students hear on campus: “research and teaching should give more space and acknowledgment to African voices” (2009). Presumably, ‘African voice’ refers not only to African academics, but also to Africans whose lived experiences can contribute to the body of knowledge to which students are exposed over their time at UCT. As I argue in Chapter Four, experiential knowledge—of formally uneducated people—has been traditionally undervalued by higher education institutions, not because of its intrinsic worth but rather because of a politicized process that privileges knowledge produced by academics in the university.¹⁰

Engaged research questions

I have established a number of principles that govern my model of engaged research, principles raised out of national and institutional policy. They include a number of values: democracy, equality, justice etc. as well as a number of activities: building individual and institutional relationships with community parties; reciprocity in processes of knowledge sharing and producing; and innovation in research method and output. The rest of this chapter focuses on the first body of principles, which also forms the first aspiration of engaged research: the social justice values that guide engaged research. In an effort to keep this paper as practice-based as I can, I explain below my understanding of how these values manifest in practice, using the design of research questions as a tangible translation of values into action. While it is important to practice engagement at all stages of the research process, “collaboration in the conceptualization and definition of the issue to be studied is a critical hallmark of effective research partnerships” (Nyden, 2006: 16). The design of research questions is a foundational site of engagement and the values embedded at this stage of the research can guide and inform the stages that follow. As such, the research question is an appropriate point of departure to explore how the values-based goal of engaged research manifests in practice. For the present discussion, I am going to group these values under the umbrella term: common good. Who the ‘common’ is, is debatable. As I will discuss in Chapter Three, a community is not homogenous and it is thus impossible to “act in such a way as to benefit ‘the community’ or ‘the public’ as an assumed whole” (Matthews, 2010: 8). For pragmatic purposes, I draw on UCT’s Social Responsiveness agenda to develop a working understanding of community: constituencies external to the university who are marginalized and poor.¹¹ Research questions that further the common good in this instance refer to questions whose answers have the potential to support these external communities in some way.

Researching for, or in the interests of, a community is not just semantically different from

¹⁰ While I will not expand on this point further here, I want to make clear that I do not support this system of knowledge valuation.

¹¹ I come to this understanding from reading the SR Policy and Strategic Goals in the context of higher education in South Africa more broadly.

researching *about* or *in* that community. Schratz and Walker (1998: 207) outline three different types of learning that are arguably applicable the case of research too. Learning *about* practice refers to traditional modes of learning about a subject through lectures and texts. Learning *in* practice refers to learning activities like field trips or service-learning. In contrast, learning *for* practice takes place over a prolonged period of time, facilitates the development of self-awareness throughout the learning process, and aims to contribute to the social issue, fact or phenomenon being studied. Similarly, engaged research *for* a particular community has a similar imperative to contribute to the solution or alleviation of a social issue, in other words, to contribute to the common good. However, in this section I argue that even intentionally common good research questions, which address a community or public issue of concern, do not necessarily translate to reaching this ‘common good’ aspiration. I outline below two research questions that respond to common good imperatives, and then use these two examples to explain the complexity of such values-based aspirations, and how, while a good starting point, having common good oriented questions is a necessary but not sufficient condition to contribute to the common good. This conclusion inspires the first of my obstacles to engaged research: individual researchers have limited capacity to enact social change, transformation, or the common good to the degree implied in the aspiration for engaged research.

The two questions I discuss below emerged out of discussions with a group of trainees in the Wellness Centre’s Health and Nutrition Programme. Trainees are sourced from one of Ikamva Labantu’s three core areas of focus: Early Childhood and Development, Orphan and Vulnerable Children, and Seniors’ Clubs. Trainees complete a nine-week training programme on topics ranging from basic nutrition and healthy lifestyles to heart disease and managing HIV. Tabby arranged for me to meet with a group of trainees—who were open to participating in a research project—to discuss what was important to them and to decide on potential avenues for research. Over the course of a couple of weeks, they decided on two questions, the answers to which that they felt would contribute positively to their lives.

1. *Why are our disability grants not renewed?*

We sit, the nine of us, huddled around a fold-up table in one of the smaller training rooms. I have my notebook in front of me, and scribble frantically as the women talk in a mix of English and Xhosa. Tabby translates sporadically, oscillating between me, the women, and the multiple conversations bouncing between us.

One woman¹² explains that her son has HIV. “He had TB and while he was on the TB

¹² As I discuss in Chapter Three, this initial attempt at collaborative research was short-lived and as such I was not able to consult with the women about their preferences for being named in the text. Thus, I have

medicines he used to get a grant. Now that he is finished with the medicines he doesn't get a grant anymore but he is still HIV+ so he is still sick."

Another woman starts to talk. "At home, no one works. I have eight grandchildren and there is no money. My daughter also has HIV and she has nothing."

I ask the other women in the group if they have a similar problem. Nodding and mmm'ing.

"My son is also sick. He is 34 years old. He used to get a grant but since February this has been taken away. He was supposed to reapply and when he did they didn't give him a grant again."

"I received the letter to reapply for the grant, and I didn't get the grant. It seems like the government is paying for TB while you're on medicine; now that you're cured they take their money away. But I am still on ARVs."¹³

The stories go round, passing from one woman onto the next. Someone knows someone else who used to get a grant, and then one day it stopped and instead they told her to get a job.

The group aaaay's and shake their heads. Another woman's son was in an accident,

"now his left side isn't working but the only medicine he gets is for TB and he still cannot work. He cannot work."

The women want to know why their grant renewal applications are denied. I asked them why, why was an answer important?

"My son loses hope. It wouldn't be a problem if there were jobs. But he loses hope. It will give him hope, to answer this question."

2. *Why do we not have flush toilets when our neighbours down the road have flush toilets?*

This was not the first time this question had been asked, both by the trainee women with whom I spent time and other residents in informal areas whose stories of sanitation have started to receive attention in the last few years¹⁴. The 2010 story of uncovered toilets in Makhaza—the township to the east of Khayelitsha—is perhaps the most illustrative of the politics and provision of sanitation in Cape Town's townships.¹⁵ In this instance, toilets and pipes had been installed and erected by the city council, but cubicles to cover those toilets had not. Residents who were not able to access other ablution facilities were forced to compromise their dignity and use toilets in full view of passing neighbours. The incident was both politicized and highly publicized. While many individual residents as well as NGOs have been involved in campaigning for better, cleaner and safer

decided to leave them anonymous. This is not to undermine the realness of their stories, but rather to keep in line with disciplinary norms regarding the ethics of naming.

¹³ Antiretroviral medication used to treat HIV

¹⁴ To read more about sanitation in informal settlements in South Africa, see:

Carden et al. 2007. 'Understanding the use and disposal of greywater in the non-sewered areas in South Africa' in Water Research Commission Research Report Number: 1524/1/07';

Goldberg et al. 2009. 'Cape Town: informal sanitation' in *The Water Dialogues* 2009;

Hilligan et al. 2012. 'Toilets count; people matter' in *Water Wheel*;

Winter et al. 2008. 'Why things fail: Greywater management in informal settlements, South Africa' in Water Institute of Southern Africa.

¹⁵ All major South African newspapers ran stories about the uncovered toilets in Makhaza starting from February 2010. The story continues to reemerge in print and online newspapers even three years later.

sanitation services, the Social Justice Coalition—based in Khayelitsha—has placed itself at the epicentre of resolving what its spokesperson labeled the “Toilet Wars”.¹⁶ The Social Justice Coalition has mobilized community groups in some of the most underserved areas in Khayelitsha. The trainee group I met had not heard of the Social Justice Coalition, and attempts to put them in contact with the Coalition were unsuccessful. Thus, despite the more specialized work being done in this field, they posed this question to me as they had yet to receive an adequate answer from others: not their ward councillor who is meant to talk to his constituents about issues like service provision, nor the toilet hire company who had come irregularly to clean the “temporary” container toilets housed in bright blue plastic cubicles. Knowing only what I had read in newspapers and NGO briefings on sanitation issues in Khayelitsha, when two of the women first proposed this question, I asked them to explain what they meant. So they said they would show me their question.

We drive into RR Section along an untarred single lane between shacks. Past women doing washing in big metal buckets. Past men sitting on 20litre paint tins, I will not presume to know what they are or are not doing. We drive past kids with sticks—they play wherever there is space—we drive past sleeping dogs. We drive past the flies that sleep on the sleeping dogs and on the refuse waiting to be moved. The lane is so narrow; everyone has to move out of the way of my car as I drive past. We get to an open space with a standpipe and three blue portable toilets. Some toilets you can flush, those are the ones closer to the main road, my companions tell me, but deeper in, there are just chemical toilets like these. We stand around watching children play in the soggy ground, Ziyanda shouts at them to stay away from the toilets. One of the women disappears for a bit and comes back with a mask. She wears it when she goes to the toilet because the smell is so bad and she is worried about getting sick. I am told that Mshengu toilet hire come here two or three times a week to clean out the toilets, but the two women tell me that these three toilets are used by 200-300 people: all the people in the surrounding shacks. It's just not enough.

When we drive out they show me toilet cubicles that have locks on them. Ziyanda asks them why this is and translates for me later the rapid and angry Xhosa that I heard in response.

It is so drunk people and children can't get into trouble in the toilet. What happens is that a few shacks will get together and they will have the key and then they can use the toilet. But this is also unfair because sometimes with the toilets that flush, people will just put a lock on them so that only they can use them and not the other people around. This means that those other people also have to walk further and come and use the toilets that are not in their area, which makes the problem even worse.

The two questions described here—the unclear renewal process of the disability grant and the lack of sanitation in RR Section—reflect issues of social development that are aligned with aspirations of contributing to the common good. Both pertain to human dignity, to socio-economic freedom, and to access to information, all of which are included in South Africa's national programme of social

¹⁶ See the SJC website, and particularly <http://www.sjc.org.za/posts/makhaza-toilets-review-the-way-forward> for a more detailed account of sanitation in informal areas.

transformation. Research questions aimed at generating knowledge of this sort are encouraged by national and institutional policy. This is a fairly unproblematic starting point. The difficulty arises in ascertaining whether addressing these research questions can actually change anything in any fundamental way, whether it can contribute to social transformation. Realistically, and reflecting on the eighteen months I spent at the Wellness Centre involved in various research projects, I am not able to change the sanitation situation in RR Section; all I can and did do has been to find out why the situation is as it is and communicate this to the trainee group who posed this question to me.

My incapacity to facilitate substantive change elucidates the first obstacle to achieving the goal of engaged research, which is to contribute to social transformation. If I were one engaged researcher of 25 000 (the approximate student population of UCT), my impact might be less meaningless. If UCT as an institution were to facilitate connections between individual students and units doing research in the same field—across years, degrees and across departments—my impact might have been greater. Let me not reify the institution, as an entity it cannot *do* anything. I refer here to members of institutional management, from the office out of which the university's strategic goals emerge, to the department wherein my research is housed. Wollman-Bonilla (2002: 320) makes an argument that students need to be socialized into doing a particular kind of research. Like young children, we learn from those in authority and we act to fit into the environment around us. The responsibility for being engaged researchers cannot lie solely with us as students. Similarly, Kassam and Tettey (2002: 320) argue that universities can embody roles as “responsible *institutional* citizens that nurture social justice orientated engagement”. Creating an epistemic community within the university that embraces this engagement ethos requires substantial effort on the part of institutions (Holland and Ramaley, 2008: 39). I discuss in Chapters Four and Five how, even if an institution's statement of purpose is to make such an effort, there are other elements of its institutionalization that prevent it from doing so. The point I wish to make here is that for the goals of engaged research to be realized on a broad scale, achieving those goals cannot be the responsibility of individual researchers, the institution must share in the responsibility of not only expecting and encouraging engaged research, but actively supporting and facilitating it.

However, despite the limited contribution I can make as an individual researcher, there are three possible ways that my common good question might in fact have a ‘common good’ outcome: if my research contributes to the work of a recognized social change movement; if the process of answering that research question is itself guided by common good principles like equality, democracy and social justice; and if I rethink what could constitute the common good using Freirean principles. It is with the first of these points in mind that scholars in the field of community-based participatory research argue it is wrong to view such participatory research as a

research project. Rather, they say: “it’s a social change project of which the research is only one piece.” (Stoecker, 2008: 111). My research was conducted through the Learning Network, which is—as I described in Chapter One—a consortium of university units and civil society organizations that runs a number of training, advocacy and social change projects. With the institutional support offered to me by the academic and organizational partners in the Learning Network, I am confident that my research has the potential contribute in some way to the work done by the Network, whether with regard to the relationships that I have strengthened with individuals at the Wellness Centre—an organizational member of the Network—or to the data and research outputs that I share through the completion of the written component of the research. While my research outputs might not be directly relevant to every other project running within the Learning Network, they contribute to a body of knowledge that the Network endeavours to share and disseminate amongst interested parties.

The second point—that the process of answering research questions be guided by common good principles—is premised on the idea that if a research project is designed with a vision of achieving or contributing to the common good, then “this vision can shape not only the ends of our work but also how we engage in doing research” (Wollman-Bonilla, 2002: 320). Much of this dissertation addresses the question of “how we engage in doing research” through describing a research method based in common good or social justice values. I therefore only give a brief example here to illustrate my point. As a university researcher, I have research expertise and social capital that the trainees who posed this question do not. In the spirit of social justice, I can share with or redistribute to the women the social goods that are research expertise and social capital. The women who posed these two questions did not feel that they had the right or power to approach their ward councillor for an answer. They described feeling scared to do so and without authority.

We’ve spent the morning chatting about whom to speak to about finding out more about the disability grant. The women identify several people that I should speak to. That I should speak to. They are insistent on this point. I ask them, “Why do you not want to ask these people these questions?”

“We have, they do not talk to us.”

“But if they don’t give you an answer, will they give me an answer?”

“Yes, you could get an answer.”

“Why could I get an answer when you can’t?”

“Because the staff shout at us when we ask them questions and then you get scared to go back, then they don’t tell you the real reason.”

“But if they shout at you won’t they shout at me too?”

“No they won’t shout at you. They will be surprised.”

“And what if the next time you go and I’m not with you and then they treat you badly?”

“Maybe sometimes they would treat me worse, but maybe they’d help.”

Agreement from another woman, Tabs translates: “You see the nurses think that it is your

right to go there. They will be scared that you'd take further steps against them.”

The nurses will think that is my right to ask questions. Unlike the trainee group, I have the power, authority and cultural capital to do so. And so, as a young masters student at the University of Cape Town, I met with and interviewed senior managers at the South African Social Assistance Services Agency (SASSA) about the procedures for disability grant renewal. I did online fieldwork with various NGOs that work in the sector and read all the policy documents to do with disability, social services and the processes of community complaints and appeals. I spoke to members of the Social Justice Coalition about sanitation in RR Section and invited myself to Department of Health workshops on sanitation in schools and informal areas. I exercised my social capital and spoke with a friend in the City Council who gave me the names and contact details of relevant councillors and I badgered them for a meeting, eventually going on a community site visit of “problem toilets” in Khayelitsha. Ziyanda and I traipsed with them around Khayelitsha, taking notes and photos and debating the politics of sanitation. I used my expertise to gain access to spaces that the women were not able to. Garcia (2000: 92) has written about how a researcher can use their “outsider” position—and the power that is embedded within it—to engage with “the outside” in a way that benefits the community. She argues further that the presence of an outsider, in this case a researcher from UCT, can also become a “symbol of legitimacy” for the cause that a community has asked the outsider to advocate (2000: 94). Through putting my research expertise and social capital at the disposal of the women I was able in some way to redistribute that power to the group—albeit in a temporary and limited fashion. As stated above, much of this paper focuses on the “how” of research, and I will expand further on this point throughout the following chapters.

The third avenue through which my research could meet the common good aspiration of engaged research is to consider the role that knowledge plays in empowering individuals. Using a Freirean approach to the self-education of marginalized individuals, an argument can be made that knowing the cause of one’s oppression equips one to challenge the authority that enacts that oppression. Freire highlighted in *Pedagogy of Hope* (2004: 108) that oppressed individuals can be paralysed by a fear of authority, a fear that prevents them from resisting structural oppression. The women in the above examples were afraid to ask the nurses at the clinic questions about their disability grants. Perhaps, armed with the knowledge of the (limited perhaps?) legitimacy of their grant renewal claims, they might not have the same fear, and might challenge the authority of the nurses in the clinic.

When I was writing up life histories for members of the Seniors’ Club, I realized that I was not the only person listening. It was clear that, when Ma’Regina and Ma’Sofie were telling their stories, the

other women had not heard elements of them. As much as Ziyanda and I asked questions, so too did the other women. When speaking about the oppression they negotiated under apartheid, they were able to learn from each other the tactics through which they resisted the crushing legislation. They spoke about Khayelitsha, about the problems and joys of their families and the losses they had suffered. Through this kind of dialogue and critical engagement with each other's histories, individuals can also learn and elucidate things for themselves (Freire, 2004: 39; Schratz and Walker, 1998: 203). Thus, it is perhaps not the life history itself—a product of research—that is a tool for social transformation, but rather the process of telling that story in the presence of others who lived through similar events. Whether this is a substantially meaningful contribution to the Seniors' Club remains an open question. Repeating Stoecker's (2008) argument cited a few pages back, applied anthropologists argue that researchers should move beyond the production of knowledge and instead use their position in the field to advocate for the groups with whom they research (Kellet, 2009: 29). Garcia (2000: 95) highlights that in particular parts of the world like Latin America anthropologists have a dual identity of researchers *and* social activists. Therefore, I am not convinced that it is really enough in terms of my aspirational model of engaged research just to facilitate the self-education of others; that facilitation needs to be accompanied by some kind of action. This is a conversation that I return to in Chapters Four and Five, where I discuss the institutional difficulties of integrating action with academic goals.

My ambivalence as to whether my research has had any real common good outcome can be attributed in part to the fact that transformation, social justice and common good are so hazily defined in national and institutional policy—if defined at all—that it is impossible to know whether as a researcher I have achieved this goal as I do not know what counts as transformation. This forms the second obstacle to achieving the common good aspiration of engaged research. The 2008 Ministerial Report on Transformation and Social Cohesion (also known as the Soudien Report) uses as its definition of transformation UCT's own interpretation of transformation, which “covers two complementary domains... the formal processes of student and staff support, the curriculum, teaching and learning and research work, and the informal ‘climate’ of the university – the ways in which people relate to one another on a day-to-day basis” (DoE, 2008: 36; UCT, 2008: 6). While arguably more applicable to my research context than Reddy's broader definition that I used earlier, this interpretation is still one that speaks in macro-level terms. In his announcement that the Department of Higher Education and Training is instituting an oversight committee on university transformation, Blade Nzimande commented: “there is acknowledgement and recognition in the [Soudien] Report that transformation is an imprecise concept, and that the understanding outlined here, focusing on the elimination of discrimination and promotion of social cohesion, is a rather restricted one.” (DoHET, 2013) UCT's SR Policy and Strategic Goals offer a more detailed account of

transformation and it is that account I outlined in the first section of this chapter. However, there is only so much detail that can be outlined in policy. It would be helpful if every unit and department within the university took that policy outline as a starting point and, in consultation with the all the stakeholders of that unit including students, generated their own definition of what it means to embed transformation in each of their specific activities. As yet, there is no such definition or interpretation or even a set of guidelines against which to track my own research, and the institution certainly has no universal methods of assessing how much or whether an engaged research project has contributed to social transformation. Thus, it is difficult to know whether or how my work fulfils the goal of “transformation” as the achievement of that goal has no clear criteria.

* * *

I have outlined the national and institutional policies that make recommendations and construct mandates for community engagement in order to establish what an idealized model of engaged research might look like. I have described how the policy landscape in South African higher education is one that advocates for engaged research to be driven by a number of social justice principles as well as a commitment to contributing to the common good. Having established this, I have explored how this might be made a reality in practice. I have identified the conceptualization of research questions as one site where researchers can realize this values-based aspiration, through the process of designing and constructing research questions that aim to generate knowledge for, and contribute to, a marginalized constituency. Through this exploration, I have illustrated how difficult it is to contribute to the common good, even if the starting point of research—the research question—is intentionally designed to do so.

I have used the second half of this chapter discussing two potential obstacles to achieving this aspiration. This first: an individual researcher has limited capacity to enact the kind of social change aspired to in policy. I argue therefore that the responsibility for achieving such change or contributing to the common good must lie as much with the institution that houses the researcher, as with individual researchers themselves. The second obstacle to achieving this aspiration is that terms like transformation, common good and social justice are so under defined that it is not clear whether or how their criteria can be met. I have outlined a number of complications with regard to what could constitute the common good and whether it refers to a tangible social change, or to the self-education of research participants. I have concluded the chapter by acknowledging that, while there may be some positive consequences to designing common good orientated research questions, there is much more that an engaged researcher needs to do and to have in terms of institutional support, to fulfil the aspirations of national and institutional policy. In the following chapter, I shift my attention to the second goal of engaged research—building relationships with

community—and continue to outline the points of tension between the institutional aspirations of engaged research, and the institutional obstacles that challenge the realization of those aspirations.

THREE: COMMUNI-WHO? ENGAGEMENT WITH WHICH OTHER?

Returning to the Wellness Centre after the Christmas break, I'm excited to spend some time with the Seniors' Club catching-up and hearing about their holidays. I almost bounce over to the bungalow and I am a little surprised to see far more women there than I've ever seen before. My smile falters as I near them, I recognize none of these new faces. There must be at least 10 women, maybe even 15, sitting in a chattering circle on the bungalow's stoep. Some have their sewing out, others are just enjoying the sun. We eye each other carefully, an unspoken "who are you?" floats between us.

"*Molweni mas,*" [Hello *mas*]¹⁷ I start slowly, and offer a little wave. Before we have time to finish our greetings, I hear a reassuringly familiar voice shout from inside the bungalow: "*Ntombeza-a-an!*" [My girl!]

I step into the doorway and see Ma'Regina's arms open to welcome me. Hers aren't the only ones. The women I know, who know me, are sitting smiling inside, on the chairs that I'm used to seeing them sit on. I step into the bungalow and, after greeting and a little small talk, I take my seat next to Ma'Regina.

"*Ma,* who are the women there?" I point to the circle of women outside on the plastic orange chairs that are usually kept in Champion's gardening container.

"Oh, they are the new members."

"The new members?"

"Ye-es, we went recruiting."

"Aah."

Over the next few weeks I learn that I am not to sit outside with them. I make the mistake one morning of pulling up an orange chair and joining the circle. A few minutes later, "*Ntombi!*" shouts Ma'Ellen. "Come inside."

I walk in, "*yes ma?*" I assume she wants me to do something, but she is chatting to Ma'Sophie. "*Ma?*" I try again, "did you want something?"

For a moment distracted, she waves me down. "Come and sit." I squeeze through the *mas* to my chair in front of the fridge and have a seat. A few smiles, but no one talks to me.

Ma'Regina rubs my knee absent-mindedly as she discusses membership fees with Ma'Java. Here, inside, between the fridge and Ma'Regina, I realize several things all at once, most importantly perhaps, that I need to add another layer, another dotted line, another complication to my already incomprehensible conceptual picture of this 'community'.

Arguably, the main feature of engaged research that distinguishes it from traditional university-based research is that it occurs in and with something called 'community'. In this chapter, I discuss 'community' for two interlinked purposes. The first is to make clear that, as the opening vignette of this chapter illustrates, community is not easily defined, if definable at all. The second is to link the indefinableness of community to one of the primary goals of engaged research: building relationships with constituencies and communities previously excluded from higher education. If the multiple parties in engaged research define community differently, simultaneously and potentially contradictorily, then building relationships with community raises a number of

¹⁷ In my translations, I have prioritized intended meaning over language accuracy.

questions and complications: who or what is the community on the receiving end of the relationship, how is power constructed in that community, and how does that community shape the understanding of particular identities?

Benedict Anderson argued that all communities are imagined, and therefore “communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.” (1983: 6). Anderson’s point is simply that community cannot exist independently of an imagining of it. A challenge in engaged research is how to represent, engage with, or be useful to community when the researcher’s idea of ‘community’ is different from how the people they group within that community experience it (Lassiter, 2005a: 134), if they experience their grouping as ‘community’ at all. In this chapter I describe three imaginings of community, explain the roots of each, and reflect on the repercussions of each imagining on my engaged research. The three imaginings of community to which I refer are: community is black, community is silence, and community is not what management thinks it is. Before I describe community, I explain the motivation behind building relationships in engaged research. I then use conceptual tools from feminist ethnography to critique the salience of the researcher’s identity—as someone trying to build relationships in and with community. I use my three imaginings of community to explore two institutional obstacles to building relationships, namely that higher education institutions constrain the way in which identity as well as community can be understood. I conclude the chapter by problematizing the relationship between individual researcher and research institution and argue that in engaged research this relationship is as important a variable as that between ‘university’ and ‘community’.

Why relationships (and the people who build them) are important

In the previous chapter I outlined why UCT values building relationships with communities: as a tool to engage with marginalized groups previously excluded from the university, as a channel through which knowledge can flow, and as a platform to facilitate other aspects of social responsiveness projects. Various community engagement literatures support and encourage these and similar institutional interests in relationship building. Arguably the strongest imperative of the Community Based Participatory Research movement—in which much of the literature on “engaged scholarship” is located—is to build partnerships with communities that nurture sustainable relationships, and much has been written on how to structure mutually beneficial relationships (Wallerstein et al, 2005; Holland et al, 2010; Malone et al, 2006; Merriam et al, 2001; Oldfield, 2007; Price, 2001; Quinn, 2005; Sullivan et al, 2001; Watson et al, 2011). In ethnographic research, building relationships with research participants is necessary to generate ethical and meaningful data (Camacho, 2004: 32). In the context of engaged research in South Africa, building relationships with communities offers an opportunity to “decolonize” the knowledge production process by

enabling participation in knowledge production partnerships (Guajardo, 2008: 8; Ross, 2010: 8-14). Across the above fields and disciplines, there is widespread agreement that relationships in engaged research can be a means to multiple ends.

Feminist ethnographers link relationships not only to research ends, but also to social justice ends, specifically to a more equitable distribution of power between parties involved in research. However, Judith Stacey (1988) described the challenges in achieving redistribution that shifts entrenched and inequitable norms of power in relationships between university- and community-based research participants. In response to the challenge that Stacey articulated, feminist ethnography offers two potential solutions. The first of which is to shift focus from the norm in research of an ethic of consent to an ethic of care. Tied to the Kantian ideal that people should be treated as an end in themselves and not as the means to another's end, an ethic of care means recognizing the humanity of research participants, and treating people—including the researchers themselves—as people, not as acquiescent respondents or figures of authority (Merriam et al, 2001: 413). Embedded in the ethic of care is a belief that more equitable relationships can be built when the foundations of those relationships are built on a basis of what is shared—humanity—and not on a basis of what is not. Caring for people can facilitate the shift from the unshared to the shared, particularly when that care is reciprocal. Theorists have argued that “care-receiving” or “responsiveness” to the care of others is as important as “care-giving” or “attentiveness” to the vulnerabilities of others (Spiegel, 2005: 138). This mutual caring encourages trust and connectedness between researcher and others. Thus, for many feminist and collaborative ethnographers, caring is understood to be part the ethical obligations of the researcher (Huisman, 2008: 379; Lassiter, 2005a: 87; and McKinnon et al, 2007; 6). However, an individual's role in a specific research project is not the sole defining variable of their identity and, as relationships occur between people, *who* those people are is a relevant factor. Thus, an ethic of care approach includes reflecting on the meaning of socially assigned identities, in order to ascertain and respond to the ways identity shapes the construction of equitable relationships (Garcia, 2000: 90).

Standpoint epistemology—the second and related solution proposed by feminist ethnography to Stacey's critique—is a technique that makes visible the power embedded in identity. This is achieved through careful and sustained reflection on, and critique of, the researcher and others' identity and their meanings in the research site (Naples, 2000: 197). Knowing who has what power and why, a researcher is able act in ways that support the redistribution of power. Because “communities are evolving, socially constructed collectivities fraught with politics and power relations of their own” (Dyrness, 2008: 40), it stands to reason that a researcher coming into a community must question continuously how their presence “intersects with, reproduces or

disrupts” the existing and changing power relations (ibid). Emerson et al (1995) write about how the ethnographer's presence necessarily results in a response from a setting, precisely because that presence is not static: it requires interaction (1995: 3-4).

Before I illustrate this argument with an example of my own, I offer a point of clarity. I have understood specific differences between presence, role and identity, and the current discussion focuses on the third. In the context of this research I take presence to mean the actual physical presence of the researcher in the fieldsite; a body that—like bodies anywhere—affects and responds to its surroundings. Role refers to the active choice an individual makes to fulfil a specific function or position. Identity refers to the socio-historical construction of how an individual is perceived, a process over which a perceived individual has limited agency. In other words, socio-historical norms and structures assign meaning to a labelled identity—like woman or white—regardless of the individual described by it. A researcher can have multiple identities (Rappaport, 2008: 17), particularly when it is recognized that she is a person as well as a scientist (Lassiter, 2005a: 64). I continue this discussion in the second half of this chapter and I argue that in order to build equitable relationships with community, which challenge entrenched norms of power, a researcher has to manage the institutionally endorsed identity she holds as ‘researcher’.

While neither national nor institutional policies make explicit reference to researcher identity, there is reference to producing graduates who have a sense of “common citizenship” (DoE, 1997: Section 1.4) and who are “capable of reflecting on the implications of living and working in different social contexts” (UCT, 2009: Goal Six). Embedded in these two aspirations, I interpret a greater goal for South African graduates, which is that they be able to connect with and relate to others. Given the divisive history of our country and the transformation agendas of higher education, I do not think this is a misguided interpretation. To illustrate the points above, I explain below the meaning of my relationships with the women at the Wellness Centre in relation to one understanding of community, where my and their historically constructed racial identities posed a potential barrier to building a relationship. The example shows how community, relationships and identity are intimately linked and cannot be made sense of independently of each other.

A white child in a black community

“Who do you mean ‘community’? The black community?” Connie’s straightforward interruption catches me off-guard. I was trying to explain my research to her, repeating the lines that are familiar to me: “I’m researching what happens when university and community do research together.”¹⁸ It was while I was asking her whether she knew anyone

¹⁸ My explanation was accurate at the point that I offered it, but now “an investigation of collaboration in university-community knowledge production partnerships” is just one of the previous incarnations of this

in the community who would be willing to collaborate with me—she leads a support group with some of care-givers in Ikamva Labantu’s programmes and knows a lot of people—that she sprung her question.

“Uhm, yes. In this context.” I start to stammer out an answer. “But no, it’s more about the community here at Ikamva. Not just the black community. But the people who come into the centre and who do the training.” Pause. “And also who work here, you know?”

Connie’s question is an understandable one in the context of Ikamva Labantu’s development work, as Lulu explained when we sat in the kitchen one morning and debated who constitutes ‘community’. “...look at Ikamva for example, it’s ‘community-based’ but only works with black people. We should have white communities if it was for ‘communities’.”

Lulu’s comment resonates in a broader discourse of community development, wherein community is “used as a gloss for talking about predominantly black poor groups” (Rohleder et al, 2008: 254). Ikamva Labantu is not the only NGO in Cape Town or in South Africa whose community development practice is reflected in Lulu’s critique. ‘Community development’ as a named practice emerged out of colonial social welfare policies in Africa in the 1940s and generally refers to the skilling up of communities through capacity-building programmes (Midgley as cited in Gardner and Lewis, 1996: 118). In development discourses like these, that are unfortunately not as extinct as one would hope, ‘community’ is imagined as homogenous, bound, and weak (Gardner and Lewis, 1996: 121). Writing in the 1980s, Thornton and Ramphela observed that the term ‘community’ as used in South Africa, “has come to stand as a cipher for people who are out of the mainstream of power—commonly when people refer to ‘the community’ they are referring to people for whom good deeds should be done in the form of charity (Thornton and Ramphela as cited in Rohleder et al, 2008: 254). Thirty years later, Thornton and Ramphela’s observation is still accurate, as Lulu’s comment demonstrates. Modernist development discourse and practice¹⁹—arguably still the most dominant in global development practice despite some substantial shifts—positions the individual, community or nation to be developed as somehow “abnormal” and in need of treatment (Escobar, 1997: 88, Ferguson, 2005: 167). The categories of “poor” and “underdeveloped” homogenizes all poor and underdeveloped people into a group in need of support from external actors (Escobar, 1997: 92). The process of categorizing and labelling may challenge or my sustain power relations, depending on “which labels are created and whose labels prevail to define a whole situation or policy area, under what conditions, with what effects” (Escobar, 1997: 92). In South Africa, the reality is such that the supposed members of communities who have been labelled as recipients/

research.

¹⁹ Very simply, development as defined in modernist terms is achieved through industrialization and poverty alleviation. Development is understood as a primarily economic process and development interventions are designed as such.

beneficiaries/ participants in or of development, are black, they are poor, and geographically, they live either in townships or in rural areas.

Interestingly, the apartheid government also used the image of the poor black community to justify paternalistic legislation. In South Africa there is a history of colouring communities, where white was/is the norm, and black was/is *a*, or *the*, community. Lulu's comment below captures the historical construction and present manifestation of 'poor black community'.

The community should be people who stay in the same place, but it has come to mean underprivileged places and areas, from the beginning, from apartheid when the areas were segregated. According to your colour you were just dumped somewhere out in an area, in far places. This is now what community means. Mainly community is blacks. It refers to the poor community so you automatically know that it's black people. It should be the community of the place, but the main focus is underprivilege. It's as if the name is for us. The Constantia²⁰ community is not interpreted like that; it's not a community.

Through development and apartheid discourse, community is black, it is understood as having little power and those who have power in the community thus defined, come from the outside. Given this reality, as a white external actor, my identity was imbued unavoidably with power. Maintaining the perception of whites with power is the trend of how white people operate at Ikamva Labantu: they provide services. They listen to a problem, go away and think about it for a while, then propose and enact a solution. I am not critiquing this practice here, I am outlining that this was, in all likelihood, one expectation of what I was going to be doing at the Wellness Centre. The group of women with whom I initially, and unsuccessfully tried to partner were beneficiaries. When I asked Lulu for her thoughts on why those women did not want to partner with me in any active or meaningful way, she explained that they probably looked at me and thought: "oh you see we are poor, you're going to give me something." Lulama mirrored Lulu's thoughts and explained that many beneficiaries engage with the organization passively. Therefore, as a white person engaging with a group of beneficiaries, the most feasible explanation for my presence here was that I was a resource who had something to offer. Ziyanda put it more bluntly, rightly transferring some of the responsibility from the women who perceived me, to how I portrayed myself: "you were going in as the white student wanting to help".

Jonathan Jansen has written about how one of the neglected aspects of apartheid in scholarly work is the relationship between overt racial oppression and "the missionary objective of whites uplifting those described as less fortunate, that is, the blacks." (Jansen, 2011: 186) I am not correlating my own research actions with some of those white scholars during apartheid, I raise

²⁰ Constantia is one of Cape Town's most affluent, predominantly white, suburbs

this point to illustrate that this model is a familiar one to fall into. Without knowing me, assumptions as to my purpose in the field are informed by histories like the one Jansen describes.

This is why the importance of relationship building cannot be overstated. I had read that the meaning of an individual's identity, and the perception of their identity based on socio-historical norms, can be challenged through nurturing personal relationships (Skilton-Sylvester and Erwin, 2000: 72, Sullivan et al, 2003: 127). I asked Tabby if she agreed. She answered,

Yes, because when we were talking about everything and of stuff that I didn't know that you would feel, I could see that you could understand the community better. Like we have common problems, as a black person and a white person. From thinking that white people are not like us I can then see that you can have problems too.

In this instance, our racial differences in identity became less important in light of the shared elements of our identity. We are both sisters to siblings who were struggling to find work—for differing reasons in each case—but the concern, the anxiety and the responsibility we felt for looking after our siblings created a shared 'sister' identity that, as Tabita pointed out, transcended our racial identity. My personal relationship with Tabs helped her, and me, to see something different from the meanings attached to our historically constructed identities. Differently perceived, my identity not only took on a new meaning, but also convinced Tabita that I was better able to understand the people moving in and around the Wellness Centre.

Lulu said something similar when we were talking about race and apartheid, and she explained her views on white people and trusting them. "Colour has counted all these years... segregation spoilt everything"

We see white people as rich, but when you were talking about working in a restaurant and not just getting money but also working for it, that showed us. Through sharing stories we can build trust, knowing you better builds this. We see that you drive a car so we think you have everything, so to come closer builds trust. But South Africans don't know each other. That's why we can't take the risk to go out to Langa [Lulu needed to go out to Langa—another of Cape Town's townships—and I offered to drive her], people will see you and then think that they can take advantage. People will think that you have money just because you're white.

It was not only my personal relationships with the Ikamva Labantu staff that shifted the meaning of my white identity and how I could engage in the Wellness Centre communities. Doing chores and getting involved in the day-to-day cooking and cleaning at the centre also contributed to this shift, as Lulu explained:

It helps that you've been doing these small things. It breaks down the idea that whites are also cleverer than blacks. You can be in the kitchen chopping carrots and it shows that you

are like us. We are made from the olden days still to believe that whites are cleverer. But when you get close to a person you forget that she's white, then she's just like us. When you walk barefoot, and eat what we eat. It is the language that makes you white. But that also helps to build trust, because you are trying to learn Xhosa and it shows that you care.

Given the history of racial segregation in South Africa, and the power that is today still associated with white South Africans, challenging the belief that white people are necessarily cleverer and more able than black people allowed me to build relationships and engage with some of the Wellness Centre staff on more equitable terms. Instead of replicating historical patterns of power, I was able to shift—albeit on a very micro-level—the way in which, as black women, they said they felt that they could engage with me as a white woman. Misguidedly, I did not think that race would be an important feature of this research, but, as Ziyanda pointed out a few months after starting at the Wellness Centre, “You need to engage your race in terms of what [the women have] been saying.” As my initial research plans started crumbling and I realized that I was not going to realize my expectations, I refocused on what had been important in the research process so far, what had had meaning to the research community, myself included. Race and racial politics in the context of relationship building emerged as one of the primary sites of activity in the research. I had been listening to stories for months, but only realized how meaningful my identity, as a white listener, had been when Ma’Regina told me one morning, rubbing my knee and peering over my notes as usual:

“It is good that you can be amongst the black people. You have now learnt how we lived here in Cape Town from before and you can open your mind to all the things that happened.”

I didn’t have the opportunity to reply to her, before she continued:

“Like when you were coming from Transkei on the bus and they would stop the bus and ask you for your pass. The police would come and ask where's your pass and they would put you in the van. It was a terrible thing.”

The *mas* of the Masincediswe Seniors Club sat and talked to me as a white person about how white people oppressed them for decades. Although I share a racial identity with the policemen who had terrorized them, my presence in their bungalow community did not elicit the same response. I am convinced that this is because I spent a lot of time, and invested a lot of effort in building relationships with the Seniors’ Club and the Wellness Centre staff. The relationships that we nurtured enabled us to transcend some of the historical distance between our different races. As a white woman in a black community (or a white child as I discuss below), I credit my relationships with the women here as the primary enabler of my research. I substantiate this idea further in the following section through a description of the different outcomes in research activities, depending on whether those activities were carried out as a researcher or as an *ntombezana* [girl].

You, me, *and* the institution

Having established that identity, relationships and community are—in the context of engaged research—best defined in relation to one another, I move now to discussing the first of the two potential institutional barriers to achieving the goal of building relationships with members of a community: an identity constructed in institutional terms like ethnographer, anthropologist, or researcher. Ziyanda and I spent some time reflecting on why my initial research attempt with the group of health and nutrition trainees did not work out. We chatted about their perception of me as an Ikamva employee and how foreign the concept of ‘researcher’ might be. However, Ziyanda captured best the primary reason for my failure: “you called them by their English names.” Ziyanda explained that me doing this created a distance between us, and framed my interactions with them as “the white student coming in to save them”, as opposed to “let’s build a relationship”. She pointed out that I should say “*mama*” because everyone is saying it. A few days after our conversation, when I arrive in the office and greet everyone, including Ma’Monica, Ziyanda’s point is affirmed: “*Molo Monica!*” I call cheerfully.

Ma’Monica turns to me and reprimands me in Xhosa, I don’t understand it all but I get the general gist, I must stop calling her Monica; she is *mama*! I apologize and greet her again: “*Molo mama!*” It feels insincere to me, so we agree that while I get used to this, I should call her Ma’Monica and we are both satisfied.

Now, months later, I call almost all the women at the Wellness Centre and Seniors’ Club ‘*ma*’ or ‘*mama*’. It is only in this dissertation that I call the women by their names.

As Ziyanda mapped out a better approach for my future attempts, she explained that: “firstly, you need to frame it as a problem that you need help with, not that you are looking for a problem that they have that you can help with. They need to want to help you.” This last point was important, “they need to be the *mama*’s who are helping you. You need to be the *ntombezana* who comes to them for help. If you do this, you won’t be just Jen from UCT. You need to talk to them about why the research is important to you.” Ziyanda’s suggestions for a new approach, which positioned the “research participants” as “the *mama*’s who are helping you” facilitated building productive and meaningful relationships. This relationship paradigm, while initially unfamiliar to me, allowed me to interact with my *mas* in a totally different way. It might be unfair to argue that UCT as an institution prefers the former paradigm of relationships to the latter,²¹ when they have articulated so strongly a desire to build relationships with communities that transcend the traditional relationships between universities and communities. But, I have never taken a research methods

²¹ The two identities, researcher and *ntombezana* are not necessarily mutually exclusive. I dichotomize the roles here to make the distinction between the two clear.

course at UCT that taught me how to be a good *ntombezana*, or how to ask *mamas* for help. I've been taught how to be a good researcher and a good ethnographer, and those are the identities through which I have usually framed my participation in communities. Being a good researcher at the Wellness Centre left me abandoned by my research participants who wanted no part of my sensitively designed collaborative research project. In contrast, being a good *ntombezana* has resulted not only rich relationships, but also rich data.

As the *ntombezana* I can rely on the *mas'* help and assistance with my research because, like the child who comes with Ma'Sarah to the bungalow most days, I may not be their biological child but I am a child (or "my white child" as they call me) and they are relationally obligated to offer me assistance. Just as I am relationally obligated to do as they tell me, and to help them in the ways that they ask me to, and do what is expected of me, as their *ntombezana*. Sometimes what they expect of me has nothing to do with research or with writing stories.

I arrive at the bungalow early and it's empty. But Ma'Regina's bag is leaning against the door, so I know she is here. Through the window, I see her in the field behind the bungalow. I walk around and greet her.

"*Ntombezana!*" she smiles and waves me over.

"*Ma*, what are you doing?" She is standing next to a box of freshly pulled-out weeds.

"This is going to be our field. We are going to farm it."

"*Aaah*," I say, looking over the sandy patch, covered in what looks like greeney-orange ground cover.

"*Ma*, what are those?" I say pointing to the offending plants.

"*Duweltjies*." Devil thorns.

I look closer and remember them from my childhood. I bend down and see that the greeney-orange plants are covered in thorned sprinkles.

"And we need to take them out?" I ask her, unable to keep the frown off my face.

"*Yes!*" she laughs at me.

An hour later my hands are red and raw underneath a layer of sand. Another hour later they are blistered and splintered. Ma'Sarah calls me over to inspect my hands every now and then and clucks and pats them before reassuring me that I am doing good work.

It is not only in my research that relationships have value. As I discuss here, in relation to the second imagining of community in my research—community is silence—the ability to relate to one another is a defining feature of community. I am not making a general argument, but rather one limited to the context of my own fieldsite, which is that the way in which community is understood affects the way that relationships can be built. When I asked the Seniors' Club what they thought community was, my question was met with an absent answer.

"So how would you explain community?"

Silence.

"Is it a difficult question?" I ask.

"Yes, it's a difficult question."

I think for a bit and ask instead: "If community starts here, where does it end?"

"Community doesn't end."

"It means helping even a stranger. So community doesn't end. Like when there's a death.

You go and help if there's a death. Even if you've been having a fight, you go and help.

Community can go out from here, it doesn't matter where you live as long as you believe."

The previous part of the conversation had been about *ubuntu*. To be a part of this community, that's what you need to believe in, *ubuntu*: the philosophy that an individual only exists by virtue of their relationships to others. That 'individual' doesn't really exist, rather, a human being is defined by their personhood, their humanity, not their individual qualities and characteristics. (Hailey, 2008).²² That is the belief that brings you together as part of a community. *Ubuntu* is humanity, Lulu tells me. It is within a person, white or black. It about being kind and about helping. *Ubuntu* is about trust. It's about helping people even if they aren't related to you, "it's in me", Lulu adds.

"The child that is here, it is not her child." Ma'Java explains. Ma'Sarah often comes in with a little boy of about six. I assumed it was her grandchild, but "it is her neighbour's grandchild. But the mother is working so if the transport doesn't come to fetch the child for school, then she takes the child" Ma'Java points at Ma'Sarah as she says this. "Helping other people comes from ubuntu."

Everyone who I asked about ubuntu all said the same thing: it's stopped, and you just can't trust anyone anymore. Ma'Regina explains why: "ubuntu these days, it's difficult. You want to help, but it is so hard. You have the heart, you feel sorry, but you also think, what if?"

Lulu's analysis from the previous week supports Ma'Regina's "what if", as she tells me "lack of trust between people has taken ubuntu away. If I don't know you, then I don't know what you want."

That said, despite saying that *ubuntu* has stopped, the women still embody the ideology. If I take seriously the model of community that my *mas* offer me, that of *ubuntu*, and shape my engaged research on this understanding of community, I have to prioritize relationships and my role as *ntombezana* in the site.

An emphasis on identity and relationships is not a foreign notion in anthropology. Ethnographic research "relates as much to identity as it does to technique" (Schatz and Walker, 1998: 198) and the whole fieldwork process is one that is made up of a series of social interactions (Freidenberg, 1998: 170). Ideas ranging from "neighbourliness" (Savage, 1988), to "cultural humility" (Tervalon and Murray-Garcia, 1998), to feminist approaches including standpoint epistemology (Naples, 2000), all point to the possibilities within disciplinary methods to take account of, and on which to premise, role, identity and relationships in research processes. Thus, perhaps my earlier statement,

²² As Jansen puts it, "Few words evoke more social confusion in South Africa than the term *Ubuntu*." (2011: 175) I am aware of the complications of using this term, and have employed it here as used in the context of the Wellness Centre.

“I have never taken a research methods course at UCT that taught me how to be a good *ntombezana*” needs to be qualified. While I have never taken a research methods course at UCT that taught me how to be a good *ntombezana*, I have taken courses in a discipline that believes this to be important. In the following chapter, I discuss the limitations that the institutionalization of knowledge places on what can be taught to students and how, and it is worth remembering this point for that discussion. For the rest of this chapter, I discuss the divergence between the imagining of community as silence—where the relationships between individuals are shaped by and in turn shape community—and the institutional imagining of community, specifically the institutional preference for viewing organizations as (or as proxies for) community. This institutional understanding of community can complicate relationships between university researchers and individuals who are not included under the organization’s umbrella of community, and constitutes the second obstacle to achieving the engaged research goal of building equitable and mutually beneficial relationships.

Community-based organizations are well placed to mediate the relationships between universities and external constituencies. The Learning Network—the consortium through which this research was conducted—has several of what they call ‘community partners’ in the form of civil society organizations. However, conflating community with an organization that mediates access to community, while a fairly common practice in engaged scholarship, can result in tense research relationships. Oldfield (2008) identifies a number of positions on a potential spectrum of relationships that so-called community-based organizations can have with communities. A community-based organization could be a mediator or a gatekeeper through which the university is granted access to the community. Or, a community-based organization could be the end partner of engagement. Or, a community-based organization could be so embedded in whichever community it is located, that there really is no difference between them (Oldfield, 2008). In my research, I encountered substantial differences between how the organization to which the Learning Network assigned me, Ikamva Labantu, understood community, and how people at the physical Ikamva Labantu site did. Similarly, I did not want to follow the Learning Network’s norm of working with organizations as communities. I was far more interested in working with the constituencies served by their organizational partners. At times, the multiple definitions of community—between the Learning Network who gave me a university-based research brief, and Ikamva Labantu as an organization, and the Wellness Centre as a physical site, and me—were in intense tension with one another if not mutually contradictory.

The centre here in Khayelitsha had been mandated by Ikamva Labantu Head Office to offer basic health care training and services to beneficiaries of the organization. Beneficiaries are those

involved in the Early Childhood Development Forum, the Orphan and Vulnerable Children Forum, and the Seniors' Clubs. Interestingly, beneficiaries do not include the 'community'; this label refers to an entirely different group of people.

Lubabalo came into the office upstairs one morning and started explaining to Keith "there is a group of community members who want to come and plant in the garden. They are volunteers. They will bring their own compost, seeds and planting equipment." Keith replies that this isn't going to work, because they'll want to come and harvest their vegetables and that only Ikamva beneficiaries like the seniors can use the ground. The garden forms part of their occupational therapy treatment with some stretching and sunshine. Ma'Monica joins in the discussion and the three debate who can access the garden, and how they could work this because Ikamva has been very clear that the centre is for beneficiaries only, not for the community...

The beneficiaries might be drawn from the geographical area around the Wellness Centre, but they are distinguished from the rest of the residents by virtue of their participation in Ikamva Labantu's programmes. They are categorized separately, in order for them to be singled out as potential service recipients. The centre had been instructed specifically not to work with the geographical community, not to offer its members training.²³ Lulama expressed her own annoyance with this particular mandate from Head Office, and joked with me that "you mustn't tell Head Office!" of the workshops that they do run for the community, for the residents of the surrounding area²⁴.

...The conversation stops and starts between Keith, Ma'Monica and Lubabalo and eventually Keith asks: "Where do the volunteers come from?"
"From the community." Ma'Monica answers.
"From the community? Keith repeats.
"Yes."
He sighs and shakes his head.

After hearing their conversation, I am confused. I ask Lulama and Keith for some clarity.

"Do you want to know what we think or what Ikamva thinks?" Keith asks and Lulama laughs a little; she also sighs.
"I'd like to hear as much as possible." I reply.
Lulama goes first. "In Ikamva's perspective a beneficiary is a person who is receiving services from the organization. The community is the place where Ikamva finds the

²³ This reflects Ikamva Labantu's policies towards the end of 2011. As the organization has grown and changed, so too have its policies and practices. The ideas of Head Office and the staff at the Wellness Centre as to who constitutes the community are more aligned now (at the end of 2012), although still not completely overlapping. I have left this section in, as it illustrates the challenges in defining 'community'. This footnote should illustrate that definitions are not static and that over the course of a year, things have changed.

²⁴ Some of those who work at the Wellness Centre felt strongly about expanding the official Ikamva Labantu idea of who constitutes 'community'. Their beliefs were not always aligned to those articulated by management, and I was nervous about including this section because of this disconnect. However, despite who the audience of this dissertation might be, "the truth is the truth" Lulama told me when I asked her what I should say in this regard, "it shouldn't be hidden." This consultation with Lulama took place in April of 2012, now, eight months later, there is less far less tension surrounding this point and, as I edit this chapter, some of what I wrote months ago is no longer reflective of the status quo.

beneficiaries.” The Wellness Centre is mandated to serve beneficiaries, not the community. Keith understands community to be a group centred around a common interest. “So it could be a church group or a sport group or where you live if you have a shared interest in the area in which you live. Ikamva views their community as the people who they work with directly.”

He adds, “There is a real misfit between the vision of the organization and what we're allowed to do here. The ‘beneficiaries’ are a really limiting factor.”

The “limiting factor” that the beneficiaries represent is not one that has gone unchallenged. The wellness centre staff has in the past used the beneficiary label to defend working with particular groups. A group of seniors for example, who aren't Ikamva beneficiaries but rather members of the surrounding neighbourhoods, are served as ‘grandparents’ of child beneficiaries. In this way, staff members negotiate the boundaries of the beneficiary community, by relabeling residents of the geographical neighbourhood in terms that allow them to belong in the beneficiary community, even though technically they are excluded from it. In another instance, the Wellness Centre staff called in the community without relabeling them, because Head Office had asked for an event to be run that did not attract much participation from the bulk of the Ikamva beneficiary group—adult and elderly women.

Ikamva is hosting a Youth Day event. I'm making a sign with permanent markers and newsprint; Tabs and Ma'Monica are making sandwiches. It is almost time to start, but the hall is empty. We wait.

The hall stays empty.

As we edge further and further past the start-time of the event, Christelle, the new centre manager, gets more and more anxious. Eventually she directs Tabs and Ma'Monica to “go and find people outside, tell them to come in.” I catch them looking at each other across the stainless steel tables, unsure of what to do, they know that Ikamva doesn't work with residents of the area around the centre.

Christelle senses the hesitation. “I'm being serious!” she says. “Management is going to be here in ten minutes and there's no one.” She pauses. “Go and call the community. Go to the school and fetch the Grade 7s.”

A little later, when the hall is filled with management and school uniforms I go over to Lulama where she stands taking photos.

“You see,” she starts to tell me, putting her arm around my shoulder and pulling me closer, “this beneficiary thing isn't working.”

I nod in agreement, looking out over the unfamiliar faces.

The challenge for engaged researchers is this: if there exists an institutional preference for engaging with so-called communities as organizations, but the community is *not* what organizational management says it is, then building relationships with ‘community members’ becomes a complicated practice. In my case, the Learning Network had an existing institutional relationship with Ikamva Labantu, which in turn had a particular view of who/what constitutes community. In my research, I built relationships with people who did not all fall into that category.

Moreover, I have done very little to nurture the Learning Network's relationship with Ikamva Labantu. The Seniors' Club do not know who or what the Learning Network is. On reflection, I have done almost nothing to further UCT's relationship with any of the communities I encountered at the Wellness Centre. As an individual, I have built strong relationships with other individuals that I continue to nurture, even though the academic goals of the research have been met. But I do not think that I have met the institutional goal of building relationships with communities.

This failure is only partly due to the disagreement with the Learning Network over the term 'community' that I outlined above. The primary reason that I did not attempt to strengthen the institutional relationships between UCT and any level or part of community in my research, is that at the point where such an attempt would have been appropriate, I did not feel empowered to do so. While I felt peripherally supported by the Learning Network through occasional check-in meetings, I had no strong feelings of belonging to the group. The Learning Network is hosted by the School of Public Health, and as a student in the Department of Social Anthropology, I had met none of the group members before starting the research, knew nothing of their research interests, and did not spend any time at their office on campus. As I work off-campus and did no coursework, I also spent very little time in the Department of Social Anthropology. Thus, I did not feel sufficiently confident in my personal relationship with UCT to attempt building or strengthening an institutional relationship between UCT and the Wellness Centre. My point is simply that while an individual researcher's relationship with community *can* translate to an institutional one and contribute to achieving the goal of mutually beneficial and equitable relationships between university and community, that translation relies on the individual researcher and the institution having a mutually beneficial and equitable relationship. Thus, the relationship between parties *within* the university is as important a variable in engaged research as the relationship between university and community. It is not within the scope of this paper to explore this idea in greater depth, but it does illustrate at least superficially that 'university' is as layered and complex a grouping as 'community'.

* * *

In this chapter, I have focussed my attention on the goal of building and nurturing equitable and mutually beneficial relationships between university and community. Using the example of being a white child amongst black women, I have illustrated that relationships cannot be discussed without taking note of how both community and identity are constructed and understood. I have argued that, while diverse sources of literature as well as UCT's own institutional policies support prioritizing relationships in engaged research, I experienced two institutional barriers to doing so

in my research: the institutional identity of the researcher and the institutional preference for working with organizations as proxies for communities. In the following chapter I continue the discussion on the relationship-building goal of engaged research, and describe how it is further compromised in an effort to meet other institutional priorities, the production of knowledge specifically.

FOUR: I KNOW THEREFORE I AM

The problem with embedded knowledge is that it is not out there; it is not easily read off the outer coating of a public curriculum. It is the claims, silences, and assumptions about knowledge concealed in the beliefs and value systems of those who teach and learn; concealed behind the classroom door, they influence and direct the substance of what counts as the actual knowledge transactions among participants in the learning process (Jansen, 2011: 179).

My argument thus far has been grounded in the practices of the university, which, with sufficient will and effort, can change. However, shifting institutional *purpose* arguably involves more substantive change. Therefore, while institutional obstacles can complicate engaged research in a number of ways, the most meaningful obstacles arise in activities explicitly linked to the production and valuation of knowledge, to the core purpose of the university. I start this chapter with a brief discussion about what characterizes knowledge production and valuation at an institution like UCT, using critical theory to explore the historical roots of contemporary epistemic practice. Once I have described the historical—and in some cases on going—institutionalization of knowledge, I articulate three particularly problematic knowledge practices in the university: (i) the disciplinization of knowledge, (ii) the devaluing of embodied and experiential knowledge, and (iii) the prioritization of a knowledge product in research. These three practices illustrate that institutional requirements of research—linked to a formal curriculum or degree programme—can be in direct competition with two of the goals of my aspirational model of engaged research: building relationships with communities, and recognizing alternative sources of knowledge through “giving space and acknowledgement to African voices” (UCT, 2010: Goal 2).

The discombobulation of Knowledge

Although community-based research [projects] purport to be community-based, [such] projects are often carried out by institutions, with structures and hierarchies that are at odds with a participatory, power-sharing model. (Sullivan et al, 2001: 137)

In my honours year at UCT, I took a course in the Department of Social Anthropology that included a section on Amerindian ways of knowing and various knowledge generation techniques employed in some parts of South America. Some of the knowledge production processes we learnt about involved entering a dreamlike state, others made use of hallucinogenic drugs, and another practice involved collective knowledge creation where learners accessed each others' subconscious domains—again through a kind of trance—to learn from one another (McCallum, 1996; Santos-Granero, 2006; and Taylor, 1996). However, in learning about how they and others learn, our class

did not engage in similarly narcotic-induced subconscious epistemic quests. Instead, we read some articles on alternative/ indigenous knowledge practices, discussed the practices in class, and wrote an essay on them and then an exam. The question I ask myself now is: why didn't the Department offer us drugs, let us trance-out in the seminar room and float between conscious states, learning from one another? The short answer I propose is that the practices of knowledge production and valuation are somewhat limited in terms of how they can be enacted at an institution like UCT, which by virtue of it being a public institution is accountable to various governing bodies including the Department of Higher Education and the Council on Higher Education. Before I can be certain of this answer, I want to consider some alternatives. The least generous is that the academic leadership in my academic department really does believe that the way knowledge is created in the university is superior to alternative knowledge practices,²⁵ and therefore does not value and engage in the latter. But, I expect my anthropology lecturers would not accept uncritically a knowledge hierarchy with university-generated knowledge nestled safely on top. I outline below the hierarchy to which I refer and explain the historical context out of which it emerged before continuing with this line of argument.

Martin Hall, previously a Deputy Vice-Chancellor at UCT, reifies the modern university to explain its dual purpose, or "double-life" as he calls it (2009: 1). The first life or purpose is to challenge the boundaries of knowledge: in content, process *and* source—what Boyer calls the "scholarship of discovery" (1996: 16). Barnett, another educationalist, argues a similar point, proposing that it is characteristic of universities to generate knowledge that "startles" convention (2004: 250). Barnett's argument, mirrored by Hall, leads to the conclusion that universities fulfil their function when they challenge existing modes and methods of thinking; and engage in projects of "critical enlightenment" (Barnett, 2004: 250). The second life of the university that Hall identifies is of self-preservation, protecting its societal position as creator of knowledge (Hall, 2009: 1). I do not want to delve too deeply into a Marxist analysis of the university's role in the production and protection of knowledge, but it is worth introducing some critical theory into the debate to understand Hall's argument and to elucidate further the knowledge hierarchy to which he implies and I refer.

One of the critical theorists' primary concerns regarding knowledge is the practice of conflating knowledge with science, and of regarding the conditions of scientific enquiry as impossible to achieve outside of the university. Habermas explained this conflation, or "scientism" as such: "we no longer understand science as *one* form of possible knowledge, but rather identify knowledge

²⁵ I am using the term "alternative knowledge practices" to designate any and all knowledge production and valuation practices that occur outside of the university. My intention is not to homogenize these practices, but rather to distinguish in contrast the uniqueness of institutionalized knowledge practices.

with science” (Habermas in Held, 1980: 296). Merleau-Ponty condemned such dogmatism, critiquing any science that “thinks itself capable of absolute and complete knowledge” (Merleau-Ponty as cited in Powell, 2006: 521). Critical theorists have argued that scientism constructs a knowledge hierarchy with knowledge produced through the empirical-analytic sciences (physics, chemistry, biology etc.) at the top, and with knowledge that can be used to manipulate or control the natural environment—identified by labels such as “technically useful knowledge” (Held, 1980: 306) or “technical rationality” (Schön, 1996: 12)—forming the pinnacle of the hierarchy. Any other form of knowledge—which includes everything generated outside of the university—is necessarily inferior.²⁶ It is the enduring refrain of positivism that is echoed here, a refrain that calls us to embrace scientism and “cleanse our minds of mysticism, superstition and pseudoknowledge” (Schön, 1996: 13).

The embracing of science above any other form of “pseudo”knowledge is as political an activity as it is epistemic. Proponents of critical theory have argued that scientific theorizing, as a mode of production, can be as exploitative as any other mode of production, falling into some of the same problematic patterns of operation (Van Heerden, 1994: 307). As in other industries, the holder of monopoly in the knowledge industry has an interest in sustaining their monopoly. The conclusion emerging from critical theory is that the university sustains its monopoly on knowledge, and in so doing protects its role as creator of knowledge and fulfils what Hall called its second life, precisely through conflating science with knowledge. I return to this conclusion shortly. First, I want to continue building a picture of the epistemic context and knowledge hierarchy in which this research is based, and then I critique the picture in its entirety in the following section.

While I have borrowed theoretical lenses from a number of disciplines and fields, my primary academic background lies in anthropology. Thus, it is relevant to reflect on the politics of knowledge in anthropology, in an effort to understand how those politics may have shaped my approach to knowledge and knowing in my research. In anthropology, much of the theory in which the discipline is grounded has its roots in 19th century Europe and its western and eastern

²⁶ I do not wish to support a dichotomy that divides science and the university from the rest of the world. Through blurring every unit and department in one institution, and blurring different institutions around the world, into one homogenous amorphism and labelling it ‘the university’ I seem to be. However, to illustrate a historical trend of valuing knowledge that was arguably once more ubiquitous than it is now, I need to engage with this artificial dichotomy. I do so intentionally. In addition, while members of the university may be aware of and defend its nuance and variety, people outside of the institution do not necessarily recognize those details. Early on during my time at the Wellness Centre, I sat in a meeting with staff from the Wellness Centre and representatives from different units and departments at UCT. As we discussed potential areas of collaboration, one of the staff members identified a particular need that the organization had and suggested, “Maybe this is where the university can help?” He and his colleagues approached the university as a whole. While I disagree with this approach, it no less meaningful than mine.

territories and today is thought to be located in northern academic institutions (Krotz, 1997). This is arguably why ‘anthropology’ is the norm, and terms like anthropologies of the South and indigenous anthropologies designate a specific kind of disciplinary knowledge. The implication of this designation is highly problematic. All bodies of knowledge, including western, global, un-hyphenated and un-prefixed bodies, are local (Geertz, 2001: 133-134; Powell, 2006: 521; and Nanda, 2005: 125). However—and if this argument reads counter-intuitively, then it reflects the practice accurately—through labelling alternative knowledge systems as local, the self-identified global can legitimate its superiority through a complementary hierarchy that values the global.

Not only is knowledge located in space; it is located too in time. Categories that were created in the 19th century, including civilized/savage, are still used as discursive instruments today, albeit—sometimes only euphemistically—in different forms: self/other, or developed/developing (Krotz, 1997: 238-239). In terms of these categories, Trouillot (1991: 18) argues that anthropology’s construction of the other comes out of the broader “thematic trilogy that helped to constitute the West as we know it”. This trilogy refers to savage, utopia, and order, which simplifies the relationships between the West and the Rest, to a dichotomous split between order, rationality, culture and civilization (the West/global), and chaos, barbarianism, innocence and nature (the Rest/local). Trouillot argues that this trilogy emerged when Europe discovered the “other” in the 15th century, and was employed historically as a conceptual tool to justify the oppression, colonization and authority of the West over groups of autonomous people. To pre-empt critiques that the discipline has moved on from the practices that Trouillot describes, the reader is directed to how anthropology or *Volkekunde* was used during apartheid. State-supported anthropologists generated knowledge about “Bushmen” that informed and enabled the national military to use Bushmen as trackers in military operations in what was then South West Africa (Jansen, 2011: 180). Anthropology—arguably like all disciplines—has the potential to be manipulated for political uses and in the past it has been. What Trouillot argues and I support is that the theoretical underpinnings of the discipline enable this to happen. I would add that the way in which knowledge has been constructed and understood within the institution and broader society also enables this to happen.

What I have described above—from the critical theorists to Trouillot—contributes to a knowledge history and hierarchy to which current academics and students respond, whether consciously or not. This is where I return to my anthropology professors who did not supplement my learning materials with hallucinogenic narcotics. If they do not support this hierarchy, or any hierarchy of knowledge constructed by the relatively powerful, then why did my honours class practice knowledge in a fashion far closer to the norm I described above, than the variety of norms found in

non-university learning spaces around the world? Again, I do not wish to reduce the spectrum of knowledge practices in the university to just one norm, and with that norm create false dichotomy with another homogenized alternative knowledge system. My argument is not that all knowledge produced by members of the university is similarly created. Rather, it is that there is one fairly inescapable characteristic to diverse university-based knowledge practices: institutionalization.

Before I describe the characteristics of institutionalization, I want to make clear that a preference for one knowledge system over another does not equate to a belief in its superiority. In the context of adult education, Jack Mezirow (1990: 14) writes about the difficulties that arise during critical reflection on new activities—including new methods of creating knowledge—particularly difficulties associated with “perspective transformation”. Perspective transformation requires “becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world”. It requires the thinker to reflect on the political, contextual and personal variables that shape their interactions with the world, variables that are so deeply entrenched in what the thinker considers natural or universal that they may be difficult to see. Engaging with and embracing a system of knowledge production different to the system to which one is accustomed requires a high level of awareness and transformation, which is substantially more challenging than just continuing to view the world through one’s default epistemic lens. Kolb builds on Mezirow’s thesis by arguing that new knowledge is sometimes so in conflict with existing knowledge, that the learner needs to make an active effort to “unlearn” much of what they already know in order to internalize the new piece of knowledge (Kolb: 1993: 146). Arguably then, because the epistemic status quo is so much more accessible than an alternative, one could prefer familiar knowledge creation practices without actively devaluing less familiar practices.

However, even if the devaluing of a knowledge system is not overt, too superficial engagement with an unfamiliar knowledge system can result in a subtler slight, what Nanda calls “epistemic charity”. This charitable engagement replaces the rigorous critique applied to scientific knowledge with what she calls a “relativist gloss”. Nanda argues that engagement based on a genuine belief in the value of an alternative knowledge system means treating it with the same serious scrutiny as is directed to scientific knowledge and critiquing the system against its internal standards of knowledge production and its overall coherency (Nanda, 2005). Instead, the relativist gloss encourages knowledge and associated practices to be respected on the basis that it is somebody’s knowledge and it is good enough for them, as oppose to recognizing that knowledge as something with inherent value (2005: 127). Such glossing avoids engagement in epistemic debates between what she calls science and science-alternative knowledge. Nanda critiques this kind of relativity,

arguing that it upholds a pattern of western condescension and that alternative knowledge systems should be engaged actively rather than accepted as appropriate for “the other” who believe them (2005: 127).

It is not my intention to critique any alternative knowledge system here. Rather, continuing another thread in Nanda’s argument, I want to explore what makes university-created knowledge appropriate for the ‘us’ who believe it. What is characteristic of ‘our’ knowledge? While broadly applicable in the abstract, for practical examples below I limit ‘our’ to the University of Cape Town. This is not to say that every discipline embodies institutionalization similarly, and at points in the discussion below, I refer to movements within participatory research approaches that resist institutionalization in various ways. Knowledge exists in political and ontological frameworks (Green, 2012: 4) and my purpose is to explore what this means in the context of knowledge that exists in, and is created by, the university. For each contextual feature of institutionalized knowledge, I also discuss existing and potential responses, which could diminish the power of some of the possible obstacles posed by institutionalization to the goals of engaged research.

There are three characteristics of institutionalized knowledge I experienced in my research: (i) discipline-based knowledge, (ii) devaluing of embodied and experiential knowledge, and (iii) prioritization of research product over research relationships.

(i) The separation of bodies of knowledge into discrete disciplines is characteristic of how knowledge is organized in the institution (Savage, 1988: 4). As counter-intuitive as the red lines drawn over the colonial map of Africa seem, some of the lines drawn between disciplines make no more sense. Goody has not been the only voice calling for the “decolonization of the social sciences” (Peirano, 1998: 108) and while his labelling of the relationship between sociology and anthropology as “xenophobic” is perhaps more forceful than most, it is not entirely inaccurate. Believing in the superiority of one discipline over others can blind scholars to the limits of their own discipline and discourage introspective critique. Escobar writes about anthropology that, and his argument could be relevant to any discipline: “anthropologists must scrutinize the domain of taken-for-granted academic practices the discourse of anthropology constructs as ‘facts’ that have as much to do with the goals of the discipline as they do with the world ‘out there’” (Escobar: 1993: 379). Escobar articulates the core of my argument: each discipline has its own set of priorities and goals. Some of the professional disciplines like law and medicine have fairly unambiguous goals, whereas others have less visible priorities (Schön, 1996: 8-9). This is particularly true for disciplines that have a social change aspiration, which is, as I have discussed, a mutable and vague goal. All disciplines are concerned with producing knowledge, but as Schön and others argue,

knowledge production is a means to achieve a variety of ends; ends which are as political as they are epistemic (Green, 2012: 10; Pollack, 1999: 18; Powell, 2006: 522; and Schratz and Walker, 1998: 205). This is the first challenge with the disciplinization of knowledge: it can obscure the purposes of knowledge creation and in so doing discourage critique of those purposes.

The second challenge is quite simply that the disciplined epistemic structure of the institution does not reflect broader society. People, including researchers, engage messily and inconsistently, this is a fairly innocuous starting point. Schön extends this logic to argue that if it is impossible to capture lived phenomena in bounded disciplinary categories, it is problematic to capture and frame research methods—designed to measure or represent or appraise those phenomena—in these same categories (Schön: 1996: 16). I agree with Schön. I did not find anthropology able to offer me all the practical and analytical tools I needed to execute this research. This paper offers several examples of where I have borrowed tools from other disciplines. The institution's answer to disciplinary insufficiencies is to create platforms off which interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research can be launched, for example, UCT's Institute for the Humanities in Africa. Fields like collaborative ethnography and community-based participatory research also encourage navigating across and between disciplines. That said, if my own experience stands as just one example, there is inadequate support—at least at UCT—for students who wish to do research not falling within the ambit of one discipline. Engaged research projects, particularly those designed in collaboration with people who do not operate within the discipline paradigm, often do not overlap entirely with the interests and capabilities of just one discipline. If students are discouraged from doing non-disciplinary research and generating knowledge in mutable spaces because it is harder to support than more neatly disciplined research, then the institution is failing not only its students but also the very communities to which it aspires to respond.

Of the three characteristics of institutionalized knowledge that I discuss, I experienced disciplinization as the easiest to overcome. Individual scholars can be critical of their home disciplines, they can find mentors in different disciplines to offer them guidance and support, and they can borrow practical and analytical tools from whichever disciplines interest them. So, while disciplinization is arguably one of the most distinguishing features of how knowledge is arranged in a university, in my research experience, it did not prove insurmountable. Thus, I have not included it as one of the institutional obstacles to meeting the goals of engaged research. However, the two characteristics listed below—the devaluing of experiential and embodied knowledge and the prioritization of research product over process—pose a greater challenge to achieving two of the goals of engaged research: recognizing and valuing knowledge produced in community (UCT, 2009: Goal 2) and building mutually beneficial and equitable relationships with community.

(ii) The second characteristic of institutionalized knowledge practices is that experiential and embodied knowledge is undervalued. Experience, and the knowledge created in action, can only be accessed by the person who does the experiencing and the acting (Schön, 1996: 19). This knowledge has less authority in the university than literature for example, which can, in theory, be universally accessed (Schratz and Walker, 1998: 199). In other words, each person's experiential knowledge is not third person accessible and is only ascribed value in an academic setting when it becomes a universally accessible artefact, words on a page. Part of this marginalization can be traced back to the superiority of the global (the universal) over the local (the individual) that I have mentioned above. Another part of this marginalization is the practice of isolating knowledge from its context and thus objectifying an inherently embodied element of human life. That knowledge is embodied has been argued from corners as varied as phenomenology and adult education, to critical theory as outlined above. Polanyi captured it succinctly when he argued that: "Into every act of knowing there enters a vital contribution of the person knowing what is being known... this coefficient is no mere imperfection but a vital component of knowledge" (Polanyi in Emig, 1977: 126).

Standing in a static queue at the Cape Town Civic Centre, I talk myself into a conversation with a fellow queuer. She is the mother of two now almost adult children, a retired nurse, and a current lay-counsellor for youth at her church. I tell her about myself and my research and she tells me about her intertwined life and work. She tells me "to truly understand someone, you must get into their world. And to get into their world, they must open up, and you must open up." I wrote her words down then and mull over them now. She knows the premises of ethnographic research. She knows that understanding requires more than distanced reflection; it requires engagement and participation. She knows this, and I know this. We both have the same piece of knowledge. I got that knowledge from reading, from sitting in lectures. From dutifully taking notes and downloading slides off course websites. She knows this because she's spent her life connecting with people. She's invested years in understanding her children, her patients and her community. Is she doing anthropology *unknowingly*, or is she doing something else entirely? I always thought "get into their world" was an anthropological insight that belonged to a body of ethnographic knowledge. I realize now that it belongs to *my* body of ethnographic knowledge, and belongs to an entirely different body of knowledge for the woman in the queue.

My queue experience forces agreement with Polanyi: it is the knower that distinguishes the knowledge. And yet, knowledge as universally accessible product, or peer-reviewed paper, or examiner-approved dissertation, offers a very clear example of an institutional preference for disembodied 'objective' knowledge. Ivanič (1998: 314) has argued that because of the value placed on objectivity, university researchers have been "forced to deny" their presence in their own research, in the knowledge that they create. This denial is premised on the belief that knowledge exists as an object independent of human interference and that the presence of the researcher will

somehow pollute that knowledge. It is also premised on the institutional insistence that the researcher's own embodied experience of research does not have academic value. Thus, in a perpetual search for 'objective truth', subjectivity, positionality and presence are marginalized. Critical theorists highlight the danger of this artificial separation of knowledge and knower. Gadamer argues that in the process of interpreting another, "there is no neutral standpoint outside of history upon which the cultural scientist could base himself" (Gadamer cited in Held, 1980: 310). Therefore, through the marginalization of experiential knowledge and disembodiment of knowledge, not only do we lose the potential richness that the researcher's experiential knowledge can bring to the process of interpretation and knowledge production, but we also presume a state of neutrality that is an impossible reality. This presumed reality hides the "possible deception" or ideology of the researcher/scientist (Held, 1980: 310).

Feminist ethnographers and standpoint epistemologists have levelled a substantial challenge to the idea of the political neutrality of the researcher, offering further impetus to re-embody knowledge in the university. Standpoint epistemologists propose that knowledge is created through and emerges out of an individual's engagement with her surroundings (Naples, 2000: 197). That engagement is in turn shaped by her standpoint, which refers to the existing knowledge, experiences and identities she embodies. New knowledge created by any one individual is determined by their standpoint. Knowledge created by an individual engaged researcher introduces an additional standpoint as she generates knowledge through reflecting on, and engaging with, others' standpoints. In addition to the two layers of standpoint, there is a third variable relevant to the creation of knowledge in a research project: the relationship between the standpoint of the researcher and those of the people with whom she researches. Unless the relationship is between standpoints of corresponding authority, power becomes a very salient feature in the production of knowledge. Usually—as I discussed in Chapter Two with regard to the equation of education and intellect—the researcher's standpoint carries substantially more authority than other research participants'. Standpoint epistemology asks researchers to question how the power embedded in their standpoint determines both what is researched, as well as how it is researched (Naples, 2000: 196). The final conclusion is that the knowledge produced through research is determined by the standpoint of the researcher: the researcher has the power to listen to whom she wants to (Savage, 1988: 9), write what she wants (Clifford, 1990: 63), and interpret how she wants. In essence, "ethnography is truth from the perspective of the researcher" (McKinnon et al, 2007: 4). This is not to say that the perspective of the researcher necessarily harms or disempowers research participants, it is merely a reminder that producing knowledge is a power-laden process. Feminist ethnographers attempt to shift the power of the researcher through recognizing "the observer is also a participant" (Savage, 1988: 14). I return to this point in the

following chapter when I speak about reciprocity and mutual learning and where I offer a number of examples then to illustrate this point. To conclude the point here, there are theories and methods in engaged research that help researchers avoid objectifying both knowledge and knower, and intentional attempts to do so start to respond to the institutional devaluing of experiential and embodied knowledge.

A further contributing factor to the marginalization of embodied and experiential knowledge in the university is that there are discursive difficulties in translating experiential or embodied knowledge into an object that can be accessed and assessed by others. Napier argues that there is some knowledge that just “cannot be known in terms of how it is spoken about in the academy, and how it is labelled, classified and owned” (Napier, 2002: 290). For example, Marchand (2003: 30), in his explanation of “why the master builder can’t explain what he knows”, identifies knowledge that he calls “performative skills”, which refer to learning *how* to do something. As this kind of learning does not refer to something constant—in his example the objects or spatial relationships involved in construction work—but rather to the practice of performing that constant knowledge, it is difficult to account for it in the conceptual frameworks designed to accommodate constant knowledge. Marchand argues that the kind of knowledge generated through “learning how” is differently assembled to “learning that” and thus cannot be understood in the same way. Conceptually, different tools are needed in order to understand such knowledge. Knowledge that exists at the interface of two domains of knowledge—in Marchand’s case conceptual and performative—is difficult to capture and to value in existing conceptual categories. Even a discipline like anthropology and its ethnographic writing tools struggle to account for some knowledge.

Knowledge held collectively poses a particular challenge. For example, there are several points in this text where I credit one woman from the Seniors’ Club with a particular quote. In most cases, however, three or four women would say something or agree with what one person was saying, or one woman would speak on behalf of others as well as herself. Putting just one name behind the quotation marks seems almost artificial and at some points I have left the quote nameless precisely for this reason. However, greater perhaps than the problem of not being able to credit individuals for their knowledge, is the problem of not being able to capture the knowledge that exists between individuals.

We have to make a programme for the Healthy Lifestyles health day on the 14th. Ma’Monica and Tabby want me to show them how to download pictures off the Internet so that they can finish the programme when I’m away next week. We sit crowded around Ma’Monica’s computer, so close that our blue wheelie chairs bump against each other, so close that she doesn’t need to reach far when she rubs my knee. I go through the process with them. They

observe, take notes, ask and answer questions. “Ok,” I say, closing all of the windows and programmes, “let’s take it from the top. Come, show me how you do it.”

Ma’Monica and Tabs sit together and go through the process from opening Internet Explorer to inserting the downloaded picture into their Word Document. Ma’Monica has control of the mouse, Tabby has the notes in front of her. Every step involves a consultation. When I ask, “ok why did you do that?” the answer is given by them both. They look across at each other, they point together to the notebook. When the next step is unclear, they rely on each other to find the solution. I know from our previous computer lessons that I cannot ask one of them to explain something to me as I won’t get an answer, just a head-shake and “*andiyazi*” [I don’t know]. But when I offer the question to them both, they know. When they can answer together, they know.

How I can extract and translate the knowledge that lies in that look between Tabby and Ma’Monica, the way that Tabby nods—once, twice, a deeper nod, a lighter nod—the tilt of Ma’Monica’s head; how can I translate knowledge in being, in movement, in a relationship, to a textual account of what Tabby and Ma’Monica know? The simple answer is that I cannot, not without doing them both an epistemic injustice. Therefore, in order to meet the goal of “giving space and acknowledgement to African voices” (UCT, 2010: Goal Two) I need to find new ways of recognizing some of the knowledge I encountered in my research. I have discussed how both the devaluing of, and the inability to account for experiential and embodied knowledge in the institution creates an obstacle to achieving this goal. In Chapter Five, I argue that the best way to include and value the kind of knowledge in the example above is to value and invest in all phases of the research, not just the research product in the form of the final text.

To conclude this argument for now, in an institutional context that cannot accommodate adequately embodied and experiential knowledge, the goal of engaged research to do so is somewhat limited in terms of how it can be realized.

(iii) I have established thus far that discipline-based knowledge and a preference for objective and objectified knowledge create obstacles to achieve the epistemic goal of engaged research. In this section, I discuss the institutional obstacle that results in a compromise of the relationship-building goal of engaged research: time. Very practically, UCT has institutionalized deadlines on the process of knowledge production. From lecture periods to hand-in dates for dissertations, time governs the knowledge practices of the university. Institutional deadlines may not seem particularly important in the abstract, but the institutional pressures on researchers to complete research products within specific time-frames and the penalties for late completion, including additional fees or deregistration from a degree programme, have consequences for how researchers prioritize their research activities. As Schratz and Walker (1998: 205) argue, time pressures and penalties force researchers to prioritize a research outcome or research product, potentially to the detriment of

other time-intensive activities like building relationships. I want to separate this from a related issue, which is that time can run at different paces between a university and a less regulated community (Wallerstein et al, 2005: 45). There are warnings sprinkled throughout the literature that outline the tension between “community time” and “university time” and the challenges that can arise when the two don't align (Huisman, 2008: 384; Ray, 2009: 6; and Wallerstein et al, 2005: 45). It would not be fair to expect research participants from external communities to meet research deadlines (Huisman, 2008: 384), particularly when they have their own cultural and political commitments that they are interested in achieving (Wallerstein et al, 2005: 46). I deal with the issue of ‘sharing time’ between researcher and participant priorities in Chapter Five. For now I want to focus on how institutionalized time pressures are problematic when they intersect with the engaged research goal concerning relationships.

My point is simply that UCT's policy goal for engaged research that nurtures relationships with communities is difficult to realize in a time-pressured context. The university has created this problem for itself. On the one hand, researchers are encouraged to build relationships with communities; on the other hand, researchers are required to generate research outputs, or knowledge, in a format that can be evaluated by the university. As Oldfield (2007: 108) argues, “good” research as defined by the university has been defined historically by its academic rigour and not its relationship with a community. These two goals are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but they can be. Realizing one goal could require that the other be seriously compromised. To ground this argument in South Africa, in the context I described in my introduction and Chapter Three: building meaningful relationships that respond to, or transcend even, a plethora of historical distances, can take years and not months. Kassam and Tettey (2003: 158) write that “true” community partnerships are long-term investments, which are often in conflict with the short-term cycles of the university. When long-term relationship-building goals are contrasted with the time allocated to completing a Masters degree at UCT, two years,²⁷ the compromise seems clear. It deserves to be said that I write from the perspective of a student in the discipline, writing for a particular purpose: I have to produce a particular research output—a dissertation—in a specific time frame. Research, which takes seriously the commitments of engaged research, needs more time than research that doesn't place the same emphasis on long-term activities like building relationships. However, the way that research, as a knowledge production process, has been institutionalized in terms of time does not encourage researchers to invest as much in the process of research, as in the product.

²⁷ The minimum time allocated to completion of a Masters degree in the Humanities Faculty is one year (Humanities Faculty Handbook 2013). There is no official norm on how many years a student may take to complete their masters degree, but funding (National Research Fund grants and internal funding through the UCT Postgraduate Funding Office) is provided only for two years.

I arrive to find Ma'Sophie sitting outside alone with her back to the sun.

"Molo *ma*," I offer a smile and a greeting. We chat for a bit, about the week, about the change in the weather. And then she tells me, "They missed you inside."

I couldn't visit last Friday, and I've been feeling guilty about it since.

"*Ndiyazi*," I tell her, [I know]. "I missed them too." I turn to the bungalow's door but before I can go inside, Ma'Sophe reaches for the knitting in my bag. I untangle the errant threads from the bag's zip and pass the woollen bundle to her.

"Is this all you've done?" she looks at my efforts disapprovingly and shakes her head. I've added only a few rows in the last two weeks. "You are being lazy!"

More guilt. I look down, I look at her, "I know *ma*, I'm sorry, I was so busy this last while." I offer a contrite smile and a "I'll do better, I promise." It's a promise flavoured by desperation.

It's not the first time the women have commented on my "lazy hands". Months ago, when I was still collecting data, I'd sit with my book as they'd sit with their sewing: me taking notes, them stitching and knitting and beading. They said I had lazy hands, because as far as they could see, I was doing nothing.

And so my lazy hands are back. The deadline to complete this dissertation, this artefact of knowledge, edges closer, day-by-day. Between reading and writing, I'm not knitting. My mismatched needles and grey wool lie at the bottom of my bag, occasionally making it onto my lap. But you can't, no matter how much you want to, type and knit simultaneously.

Right now, I have a grant, a department, and an impending deadline, all telling me: Jen, you need to finish. My masters degree requires a wordy product, and my knitting, my happily tatty knitting and all that it symbolizes; it suffers.

UCT will not give me a degree for the relationships I have built with the women of the Masincediswe Seniors' Club. I will not be graded on my knitting. In fact, I will be offered no formal recognition for the successes I have had in achieving some parts of the non-epistemic goals of engaged research. I will, however, be recognized for generating a knowledge product in the form of a 45 000 word dissertation. I hand in a dissertation, not my knitting. It is not feasible for me to complete both. If I had a more generous time allocation, and an extended research grant, I am sure that I could. Herein lies the tension between the university's goals for engaged research, and for generating research products. With limited time and penalties for late completion I am forced to prioritize the latter and be "lazy" in the former relationship-building goal.

I discussed in the previous chapter that anthropology, as a discipline, is not congruent with compromising human relationships. But anthropology is an institutionalized discipline and, as such, disciplinary aspirations are tightly limited by the parameters of the institution. Keene and Colligan (2004: 12) argue, in discussing the limits of anthropology, that the discipline is "still mired in an institutional culture that defends the separation of scholars from the people with whom they work". To mitigate the potential undervaluing of relationships, I echo the arguments of others; it is essential that researchers privilege consciously and actively the entire research process as much as

the product of ethnography (McKinnon, 2007: 3). I argue this point in Chapter Five, and illustrate what it might mean in practice. For now, hopefully the tension between the “product” (knowledge) and “process” (relationship) goals of the institution is clear.

* * *

This chapter has built on the previous two to highlight that an individual researcher in an institution like UCT cannot easily realize the goals of engaged research. I have outlined how the goals of engaged research, specifically to build relationships with communities previously excluded from UCT as well as to recognize knowledge created outside of the university, are compromised when faced with the institutional pressure to produce a particular kind of knowledge. I opened this chapter by arguing that to challenge the purpose of the institution is a greater challenge than to challenge its institutional practices. While UCT may believe in and sincerely aspire to broader goals of engagement—positioning in policy social responsiveness as the third core purpose of the university, alongside research and teaching and learning—research engagement does not enjoy the same position in reality as the other more explicitly epistemic core purposes. Having established six substantial institutional obstacles to research engagement in Chapters Two, Three and Four, in Chapter Five I discuss how it is possible for an individual researcher to negotiate those obstacles and their affects in an attempt to meet the aspirations of engaged research.

FIVE: MEANS AND ENDS

“Research as praxis means that theory and practice, action and deliberate reflection, meet in a dialogic relationship in the *process* of carrying out any inquiry, not just in the research report. Such research is not only grounded in, but is also intricately intertwined with practice...” (Wollman-Bonilla, 2002: 324, original emphasis).

The last three chapters have highlighted a number of divergences between the ideals and activities of engaged research and other institutional practices and priorities. While I have discussed briefly in them some methods able to negotiate these points of tension, in this chapter it is my explicit aim to focus on just that. My argument in this chapter is premised on the belief that it is the entire fieldwork process and not just the resulting product that constitutes ‘research’ (Price, 2001: 150 and McKinnon et al, 200: 3). There is much that happens in the course of research that is not captured in the textual product, yet those activities can have bearing not only on the way knowledge is managed in the product but also on the relationships between researcher, university and community as well as the potentially positive contribution the research and researcher can make to community. As Rappaport (2008: 4) argues in the context of collaborative research in South America, it is more important that research contribute to community than it is captured in an academically accessible format. Similarly, when it comes to place and value of engaged research in South African higher education institutions, its importance to community is a relevant factor. Research findings do not necessarily affect directly or immediately the people who informed them, even when part of a greater social change movement: change takes time. However, the presence of the researcher and the manner in which she conducts her research will have immediate and direct affect. Thus, the product is not the sole marker of ‘contribution’ in engaged research (Price, 2001: 149; Lassiter, 2005a: 11).

In addition, my dissertation is the only component of my research that will ever be ascribed value through a formal institutional channel, despite the fact that it captures only a slice of the total knowledge that was generated through my research experience. More specifically, it captures only the knowledge that *I* produced and that was relevant to *my* dissertation. Taggart (2007: 55) has argued that understanding academic outputs to be an individual act as oppose to something that is generated through a collective or social process is an “arbitrary” designation, since in reality the lines are more blurred in terms of who contributes what and why to the process. Another element of this arbitrariness is articulated in feminist ethnography, where it is argued that different products within the fieldwork process are considered products or not, depending on what one thinks constitutes research and what the purpose of research is (Savage, 1988: 6; and Kassam and Tettey, 2003: 158). It is thus not only unjust to privilege one part of the research over the others,

but failure to recognize the knowledge embedded in each part of research does not take into account the full contributions of other participants.

To respond to the above and other problems that arise in valuing only one research product, collaborative ethnographers propose that all parts or phases of the research involve knowledge production (Lassiter, 2005b: 84) and this is the idea I explore in this chapter. I am not generalizing my claim to extend to all instances of research; I speak only about research that aspires to the model of engagement—or something similar—that I have spent the previous four chapters describing. In my attempts to meet aspirations of engaged research, my fieldwork process provided me with far more opportunities to do so than my research product—this text. Thus, I argue in this chapter that, because all the phases of research—including conceptualizing research questions, designing the project and activities linked to data gathering and analysis—have the potential to contribute to achieving the goals of engagement, they are as important as the research product and should be recognized as such. By “recognize” I mean that individual researcher *and* institution values, critiques and reviews to the same extent aspects of the research other than the textual product. If engaged research refers to the entire process of research, then the entire process should be assessed. A reminder that the three goals with which I am primarily concerned are: recognition of community knowledge and knowers, building relationships with external constituencies, and making a contribution to social transformation. Intuitively and empirically these goals cannot be met in a research product alone and yet the product is the sole means of assessment of this piece of engaged research. In short, the institution will assess my ‘research’ and not my ‘engagement’, if I can dichotomize the two temporarily. However, as an individual researcher I can value both components and in this research I attempted to do so.

I start this chapter describing how I attempted to bridge the conceptual distance between ‘process’ and ‘product’ in order to approach the textual product as just one phase of my research, and not as a proxy *for* my research. The second half of the chapter splits its focus between collaboration, service and reciprocity. I give a brief history of collaboration as research instrument and then introduce some of the ways I practiced collaboration in my research, mostly through reciprocal learning relationships and through service. I also propose that reciprocal relationships of non-epistemic exchange create the conditions in which mutual learning and recognition of multiple knowers can occur. I conclude the chapter by arguing for the vital role of critical reflection in engaged research as an overarching tool to critique and review the various knowledge products of the research process. I return to Freire at this point in my argument and draw on his arguments of “critical consciousness” to highlight the relationship between reflection and social change.

Processing 'product'

For me, the easiest way to start thinking about my dissertation as a part of my research and not a report on that research was to write it at the same time and in the same physical space as my other research activities. I discuss the point on contemporaneous writing at the end of this chapter in relation to the role of reflection and reflective practice in engaged research, for now I focus on where this dissertation is/was written. Often, the practice in field-based research is to take data from the field, make it into knowledge in the university, and in its completed form return it to community to be disseminated. As Clifford states, "If much ethnographic writing is produced in the field, actual composition of an ethnography is done elsewhere" (1988: 39). However, when the parts of the research process are separated in this way and certain activities are ascribed certain locations, there is an implicit endorsement of the belief that knowledge is produced within the university and not within the field or community. A more embedded product, one that is not isolated from the context out of which it is born changes this pattern, albeit in a small way. To this end, I attempted to write *from* the field, a practice described in feminist ethnography (Freidenberg, 1998: 172). Writing can be more or less "situated" (Clifford, 1990: 64), and through writing as much as I can from the Wellness Centre, I have struggled to make it more situated. Producing knowledge in the form of this dissertation, in the same place where the 'raw material' for the dissertation was sourced, is a tangible way of challenging the notion that 'academic' knowledge is produced within the corridors of the institution.

I do not think that locating the physical act of 'writing-up' outside of the university is sufficient in and of itself to challenge the dominance of the university as sole or primary knowledge producer but it has seemed to me to be one small step in that direction. Spatially, writing my dissertation in the field, in the corner of the office next to Tabby's desk as opposed to Clifford's "elsewhere", breaks the distinction between what is done in the field (participating, observing, being), and what is done in the university, on campus (reflecting, writing, generating knowledge). I agree with Emerson et al (1995: 15) "'Doing' and 'writing' should not be seen as separate and distinct activities, but as dialectically related and interdependent activities". While they argue this point in relation to taking fieldnotes, I believe it is equally applicable to the process of writing the text. Writing in and from the field, I have been able to write more easily in terms of 'being here', in terms of situating the text in a place. When reading my fieldnotes on my initial meetings with the trainees in the health and nutrition programme, and turning those notes into ethnographic text, I look to my right and see the space in which I had those conversations. Through writing *here* I have found I am able to break, at least conceptually, one boundary or border between community and university. By writing in terms that do not distinguish where a "here" or "there" are, it has seemed easier to conceive of the research space, which extends between university and community, as one whole. The distance

created between doing fieldwork and writing ethnography does not need to exist in the shape that it does, and as this chapter discusses, such a distance can make it difficult to achieve the goals of engaged research.

And so I type this between making tea for Lulama—one sugar with milk—and chatting to Lulu about the plastic snake she mashes between her fingers to relax her hands after her day of massaging others. She interrupts my writing to tell me about the man on the taxi this morning that told her she should pray to God because he saw she is blind. I try and finish my paragraph but “...he told me to read Psalms. Obviously he doesn’t know the Bible because there are no stories of blind people in Psalms.”

I laugh. “Wise words Lulu,” I say as I click the ‘save’ icon.

Writing from here reminds me too, that my relationships are as important as my words. If I have to sacrifice relationships at times for writing, well then --

Collaboration, Reciprocity and Service

Discursively, much of what is referred to as ‘engagement’ within the community engagement literature, is called ‘collaboration’ by anthropologists. From the mid 19th century, American anthropologists doing research with Native Americans, first independently and then through the Bureau of American Ethnology, often employed collaborative methods that relied on intense and sustained engagement from participants. Beyond this, many anthropologists working with Native American groups got drawn into participating in legal and political activities that had very little to do with their research, but that benefited from their advocacy (Lassiter, 2005b: 86). Early collaborative initiatives also offered an alternative to single-authored texts. Franz Boas’ work with George Hunt, and Alice Cunningham Fletcher’s work with Francis Le Flesche, are two examples of anthropologists recognizing explicitly the contributions and knowledge of a research participant through sharing authorship with them (Lassiter, 2005a: 30).²⁸ Roger Sanjek (1993) traces a number of other patterns of collaboration within the discipline in regions as diverse as Melanesia, Indonesia and Africa. His critique of this collaboration is that ethnographers did not credit sufficiently, nor recognize the full value of the contributions of their local partners (1993: 13). Today, it is still the exception rather than the norm to see ethnographic texts sharing authorship between academic scholars and community scholars.

Many of the early collaborative efforts of anthropologists were stunted by the increasing institutionalization of the discipline and, particularly, by the growing academic dominance of single-authored texts (Lassiter, 2005b: 89; and Kassam and Tettey: 2003: 158). Change in practice started in the post-colonial 1950s, during which issues of power, representation and voice resurfaced (Clifford, 1988: 41). The hegemony of the west—including its role in knowledge production and valuation—was more easily challengeable in this post-war, post-colonialist climate

²⁸ Both Boas and Fletcher recognized Hunt and Le Flesche as authors and not just contributors.

of shifting authority than ever before (Lassiter, 2005a: 50). This was particularly true in areas where previously oppressed local groups were enfranchised to “own” their past, history and memory (Ray, 2009: 1). Arguably, however, the greatest catalysts for change in the way engagement with communities is carried out in practice today have been branches of the feminist movement, a social movement that moved into and out of the institution, and from the 1970s, feminist ethnography grew. Judith Stacey’s *Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?* (1988) described the manifestation of power in epistemic relationships between university- and community-based researchers and research participants. Feminist ethnography proposes the prioritization of relationships in the research process; a critical sensitive to power and resistance; an analysis of identity and socially ascribed position in the research (as I discussed in Chapter Three); and part of its practice includes consensus, negotiation and any other number of increased opportunities for participation and collaboration (Benson and Nagar, 2006; Huisman, 2008; McKinnon et al, 2007; and Naples, 2000).

Around the same time, “indigenous” anthropologies entered the disciplinary scene. Formally defined in the 1980s as “the practice of anthropology in one’s native country, society and/or ethnic group” (Peirano, 1998: 109), the movement has continued to grow, particularly in the global south (1998: 207). The “indigenous anthropologies” movement highlights a disciplinary move away from the study of “primitives” or “others” to a study characterized by the “relationship[s] between observer and observed” (1998: 108). The 1980s also marked the emergence of a postmodernist anthropology, which renewed a disciplinary focus on power, voice, subjectivity and dialogue (Lassiter, 2005a: 60). It is out of this feminist, postmodernist, post-colonial environment that collaborative ethnography as a labelled practice or movement emerged. While each movement has its own nuance, all attend to power in the research process, and all advocate for greater recognition of knowledge produced outside of the university. Collaborative ethnography, as I described in the introduction to this chapter, recognizes that all phases of the research process involve knowledge production, and therefore that phases all can benefit from participation (Lassiter, 2005b: 84). The argument extends to saying that through participation, participants are able to exercise agency. When compared to the goals of engaged research, which include offering community members opportunities to share their voice and ideas—where “all involved parties are encouraged to articulate their vision and objectives related to the collaborative activities” (UCT SR Policy, 2008: Section 2.3)—the goals of collaborative ethnography are very much aligned.

As the brief history above indicates, it is not that collaboration has not been happening throughout anthropology’s history, it is rather that collaboration in my research was the intentional focus of the approach, as opposed to a happy by-product of sensitive ethnographic research. Within

collaborative ethnography there are several proposed sites and methods of collaboration, including: principal consultants as readers and editors of ethnographic texts; focus groups of research participants to offer feedback at various phases of write-up; community-appointed editorial boards; community forums that allow for public comment on evolving text; and co-produced and co-written texts (Lassiter 2005b: 94-95). Examples in feminist ethnography illustrate even more opportunities for collaboration, with some researchers arguing that integrating service into the research process—and in so doing strengthening the reciprocal relationships between researcher and community—is an essential component of a successful collaboration (Huisman, 2008: 373). Through making the relationship not just about research, and through generating additional sites for collaboration, service makes collaboration in the research more meaningful, more productive in terms of generating different kinds of knowledge and more ethical in the context of an ethic of care. I return to this argument about the value of service in engaged research shortly.

Through introducing intentional points within the research process for all knowers to articulate their own knowledge and to comment and review the knowledge of others, collaborative activities challenge traditional academic models of producing knowledge—the problems of which I have discussed in Chapter Four. In my own research, I soon gave up on structuring formal channels for collaboration as my early attempts drew little interest from Ikamva Labantu’s beneficiary groups. I articulated part of the challenge in Chapter Two, when I described my inability to respond appropriately to the trainees who articulated that they did not feel that they had the authority to ask questions and challenge power, which are important components in collaboration. The other part of the challenge was simply that the trainees had only basic skills in reading and writing, which also limited the ways in which they could be involved. In addition, while I needed to generate a dissertation in English, these women spoke almost exclusively Xhosa. Thus, there were practical issues that created a barrier to formal collaboration of the kind outlined by Lassiter. However, even after the failure of that first early attempt, I still wanted to include others’ analysis and input in my research, as I was and remain convinced of the potential that collaborative activities might have for opening additional channels of knowledge production. Writing *from* the Wellness Centre provided one such avenue of collaboration. When I got stuck while writing, struggling to make sense of an event or story, I asked one of the staff members for their opinion.

Towards the end of 2011, Lulu spent a lot of time at the Wellness Centre without patients to treat. Then, the two of us had plenty of time to sit in the hot office and chat about my early collaborative attempts and she was happy to speculate about where I had gone wrong and to offer her own opinion on the claim and renewal processes of the disability grant, of which she is also a recipient. We also had many conversations about research, about the universities of Cape Town and the

Western Cape, and about working in communities of which one is not a member. I would read something and ask Lulu if she agreed. All of those discussions informed what is written here. Had I taken my data out of the field and only started the analysis after leaving, I would never have had those conversations. This would have both minimized Lulu and others' presence in this product, and resulted in a less rich and meaningful analysis. Thus, while not a formal model of collaboration, writing parts of this dissertation from the Wellness Centre offered me the opportunity to shape it in consultation with others.

This kind of collaboration with the Wellness Centre staff, characterised by a: "Tabs, what do you think about what so-and-so told me?" assisted in another very meaningful way: it offered the staff an opportunity to understand my research and what I was doing there. As I recorded in my notes,

Tabby tells me that for the first couple of months she didn't know at all what I was doing and what I wanted. It was only after time, after asking her questions to clarify my own thoughts, that she began to get a sense of my interests and thus could participate more as we had a shared or "co-understanding" of what the research entailed.

Co-understanding emerges when, through the relationships built up over time, research participants—including the researcher—generate a base of shared experiences, epistemic and others, against which they can reference ideas and observations (Lassiter, 2005a: Chapter 6). It refers to the shared experiential and knowledge space that is created by individuals from independent backgrounds (Rappaport, 2008: 13). Through my everyday consultations with, and questions to, Wellness Centre staff, we built up a co-understanding of the research project that allowed for greater participation from all of us. And while there is certainly a risk that their knowing what I wanted might have encouraged the staff to provide me with the answers that they thought I needed, the many times that Tabby and Lulu voiced their disagreement with me about how I interpreted someone's story seems to indicate that I did manage to mitigate that risk. One of the disagreements between Tabby and me, about whether a university is unapproachable (the story she told of the "reserved" UCT occupational therapy students), yielded a discussion that helped me to realize the differences that some people who have been historically marginalized from higher education in Cape Town perceive between UCT and UWC. This realization catalysed in my mind the growing salience of race and racial politics in my research.

In addition to the 'everyday consultation' collaborative activities I employed, there were two other related aspects of collaboration that I explored during my research: (i) reciprocity and (ii) service. The rest of this chapter addresses these two practices with a particular focus on how they enabled me to build particular sets of relationships with the women at the Wellness Centre, relationships that not only mitigated the risk of acquiescence, but also enriched the research in a number of other

ways. As I discuss how we constructed those relationships, I highlight the links between different relationships of reciprocity, from those that have nothing to do with knowledge to those that enabled mutual learning and knowledge sharing.

(i) Reciprocity, very simply understood, refers to giving, receiving and sharing. However, this one concept has spawned an entire sub-field within anthropology about social exchange. I have not included much of this literature as I do not actually like the term reciprocity; it is too embedded in Maussian obligations (1997) to have positive connotations. It seems to imply that, in the research context, participants are obligated to receive me—with no agency to decline my invitations of participation—that they are obligated to participate and that I am obligated to give something back: give something back out of duty rather than out of a sense of being a contributing member of the research community. In contrast, I find Mauss's concept of "total prestations" a more easily usable concept. "Total prestation" refers not just to the acts of giving and receiving, but also the context in which such exchanges happen as well as the people involved (1967: 3). Mauss argued that to understand the meaning of exchange and gift-giving, one must recognize there are contextual and relational variables that are as important as the actual object being exchanged or gifted. Giving involves not just a tangible object, or labour (Carrier, 1991:122), but includes too a part of the giver (Mauss, 1967: 8). Thus, any one object does not have a static meaning, rather, its meaning is determined by the persons giving and receiving the gift and the relationship between those people. As such, giving and receiving gifts or labour can strengthen the ties and relationships between people through offering a tangible channel for that relationship to be articulated and enacted. In the context of engaged research then, reciprocal exchange of gifts has the potential to play a meaningful role when it comes to building and nurturing relationships between individuals involved in the research process.

Giving and receiving gifts can also facilitate a move away from institutionally defined researcher and participant roles, and allow for individuals to give and receive in their personal capacities. For example, after a year at the Wellness Centre, I held a party for the Seniors' Club to say thank you for making the bungalow an open space to me and for tolerating my incessant questioning. I made them a poster saying "*Ndifunde lukhulu kuni*" [I have learnt so much from you] and brought them a gift of tea, coffee and sugar. They loved the poster, it hangs in their bungalow months later, but, they said, they weren't going to thank me for the tea. They wanted to thank my parents. They explained that it was my parents who had brought me up right, and it was my parents who had shared me with them. They asked me to convey this message; so, when I went home that afternoon I wrote an email to my parents, attaching a photo that my *mas* had asked me to take and send to them. When my *mas* gave me a new name, it also involved consultation with my parents:

“Did they like it?” they wanted to know, and “what did they say?”

“Yes,” I reassured them all, remembering the conversation I’d had with my parents over the weekend, “they think it’s great!”

In these exchanges, I was not a researcher receiving a gift from, and in turn giving a gift to her participants, rather, I am a young woman, an *ntombezana*, whose identity is understood not in terms of a research project, but by personhood in relationship. Meaningfully, my *mas* did not ask me to pass on their regards to the university for making me a good engaged researcher; they asked me to pass on their regards to my parents for making me a good daughter.

I discussed in Chapter Four how the institutional identity of ‘researcher’ can limit the ways in which engagement occurs, and limit engagement in such a way as to make the meeting of engaged research goals difficult. Giving, receiving and sharing with the women at the Wellness Centre offered me a channel—albeit sometimes a temporary one—to take on a different role in the site and through that role renegotiate the power associated with the researcher role. From my experience I would argue that each role I took on during the research process enabled the other roles to be differently understood, in other words, I was able to dispel the suspicion of being a researcher, for example, by being a good *ntombezana*. I discussed in Chapter Three how this role was crucial in the progress and success of my research. One of the primary ways that I proved my aptitude as an *ntombezana* was through exchange.

Despite valuing many of Mauss’s arguments, I am still uncomfortable with the obligations he embeds in exchange. Novella Keith’s (2005) notion of “interconnectedness” carries the same meaning of mutual benefit, of mutual respect and of engaging with an aspiration to equality, but without relying on the same premise of obligation. It relies instead on the relationships between people; and, she argues, it is on the basis of those relationships that we give and receive. I argue that one of the primary ways to achieve such interconnectedness in research is to complement traditional research activities with some form of service.

(ii) Service involves collaboration in *somebody else’s* project. In my experience of such collaboration, I immediately lost a measure of my authority as I was no longer the owner or director of the project. I was told what to do, and while I had opportunities to take initiative, the purpose of the service was to generate a product for the staff, not for me. My research became part of the means to somebody else’s end. Service-learning scholars have argued that, through service, it is possible to build relationships through which “all people understand and embrace [their] connectedness and interdependence” (Mitchell, 2008: 59). I explain how this connectedness and interdependence manifested in my research in the sections below. Mitchell (2008: 59) argued further that

relationships built on social connections and interactions, as opposed to those built on need or utility, offer a sturdy platform to acknowledge differences that exist between people, while also helping to challenge a self-other binary and to prioritize instead points of intersection. This kind of relationship is reciprocal in that it demands engagement from each participant, but a particular kind of engagement where “being together” is as important as other elements of exchange.

In terms of being involved in somebody else’s project, when I arrived here, I asked the staff if there was anything that I could do. Not in terms of researching a question, but in terms of tasks around the office, in terms of any service that the staff would find helpful. In addition, while I wanted to offer a valuable service to the organization, I was hesitant to do service that positioned me as an outside expert necessarily, as I feared that doing so would reinforce my authority in the site. Thus, I tried to do service that recognized the expertise of the staff. I did this by offering to do tasks that freed up their time, so that they could do the tasks that they are uniquely qualified to do. I completed a whole lot of basic tasks like filing and database management, in order to give them extra time to focus on other more specialized work. I grated carrots for Ma’Monica’s vegetable soup, I created poster after poster, and I decanted Lulu’s oils from their unwieldy bottles into easy-squeeze tubes. Through doing this I was able, as Lulu explained in reference to my carrot chopping duties, to “show that you are like us.”

The centre is closing on Friday for the Christmas break. The chairs are stacked in black plastic rows under the stairs, the green and yellow enamel teacups have been counted and boxed, and we’ve sat and gone through each resource file, ensuring that every worksheet is where it should be. All that’s left now is to clean. And we’ve all been cleaning, Ma’Monica, Tabby and I. Even Joubertinia and Dan from next door came to help. Tabs and I are in the kitchen, she’s mopping the floor, I’m scrubbing down the stainless steel tables with Sunlight soap and steel wool. My fingertips feel smooth and I bring them closer to my face to inspect any damage. Ma’Monica walks in and sees me. Laughing, she tells me: “I know you didn’t come here to clean, but Ikamva doesn’t have a cleaner so here we are all cleaners!” “Ag it’s fine I don’t mind,” I tell her as I sniff my hands, “it just makes my fingers smell.”

It is important in engaged research to “show that you are like us” because, like the reciprocal exchanges I discussed in the preceding section, doing so allows the researcher to be differently perceived from their institutional role. For example,

Lulu and I were chatting about what makes a good or bad researcher when she asked me: “Do you know what *sturvy* is?” I laughed, I haven’t heard that word in years. *Sturvy* is slang for ‘pretentious’, or thinking that you are above other people, although the Afrikaans “*aansitterig*” [putting on] offers a more visual picture of *sturvy*. It’s the opposite of down to earth, which, Tabita explains is the quality she wants her university researchers to be. “People are suspicious and researchers should try and be helpful and to understand people. You need to be down to earth so that people can approach you.”

Tabby's statement is particularly relevant in contexts where one researcher follows another, each building on the history of the former. If there has been a history of uncooperative or unhelpful researchers, a new researcher is understandably approached with caution (Sullivan et al, 2001: 139). As Tabita's critiques make evident, I was not the first researcher at the Wellness Centre and I have seen other researchers come and go in the time since I have been here. Doing the kind of menial work that I spent months doing can prove the "seriousness" of the researcher (Holland and Ramaley, 2008: 35; Price, 2001: 145; and Stoecker, 2008: 108) and go some way to dispel a general suspiciousness of university researchers. Tabby's least favourite group of students, the occupational therapy students from UCT, provided her with yet another opportunity to explain what she thinks researchers should and shouldn't be: "They didn't come to help with things, but with you we are trying to help each other, it's a 50-50 relationship. You are willing to help. You show you are willing by being just like everyone else." What Tabby calls our '50-50 relationship' is synonymous with the relationship that Mitchell and Keith describe in their discussion on interconnectedness and interdependence.

The relationships we created through helping one another had another positive spin-off for my research: by giving them time, they give me time.

I arrive at the office and Tabs gives me a frantic hug hello.

"Sisi," she interrupts my question about her weekend, "what time are you leaving?"

"Tabs, I've just got here!" I answer laughing.

"What time?" she repeats her question, but tags on an impatient smile to let me know she's not annoyed.

I'm only here to see my *mas* for a quick cup of tea before heading back to work. "Around 1pm." I answer.

"Ok," she tells me, "I'll make time for you before you go."

She returns to the round table covered in messy piles of notes.

"Tabby, do you need some help?" I offer. Now that I'm only a weekly visitor to the Wellness Centre, squeezing in a couple of hours on a Friday morning, I can't help her like I used to.

My visits these days are just that, visits.

She nods a relieved nod.

I sit down next to her as she explains how I should order the piles. We sit in silence for a minute, just rustling papers.

"Well, now that you're helping me, I can talk to you." She smiles at me, less impatiently this time.

"Ok cool," I return her smile and reach over the table to the pages on the far side, "so what did you watch this weekend?"

Having a relationship characterised by giving, receiving and sharing gifts and labour, which service facilitates, offers a solid platform on which to give, receive and share knowledge, thus encouraging mutual learning. Arguably, having multiple channels of reciprocity—used here without the

Maussian obligations—including some that are totally unepistemic, makes it easier to create reciprocal learning channels. The latter channels are modelled on and supported by the former. Skilton-Sylvester and Erwin (2000: 65) describe mutual learning relationships as those that support a caring and personal relationship between parties, in which spaces for deep reflection on how individual and social structures shape learning are created. The primary base upon which this space is built is trust. If learning requires an element of risk, particularly when it might be disruptive or discomfoting learning, then trusting relationships are a necessary condition for that learning. Skilton-Sylvester and Erwin reflect a somewhat Freirean approach to viewing learning relationships, in that it also affirms the knowledge and agency of all involved. To illustrate: in *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire recalls playing a knowledge game with a group of (formally) uneducated peasants. In the game, they ask each other questions and mark a point for everytime they ask a question that the other cannot answer (2004: 37-38):

First question:

“What is the Socratic maieutic?”

Generally guffawing. Score one for me.

“Now it’s your turn to ask me a question,” I said.

There was some whispering, and one of them tossed out the question:

“What’s a contour curve?”

I couldn’t answer. I marked down one to one.

...

And so on, until we got to ten to ten.

Freire illustrates with the above that a university educated individual can embrace and use the knowledge that they have, while not being more knowledgeable than others, as long as the other’s knowledge is recognized and valued through a reciprocal learning relationship. In my relationship with Tabita, I tried to mimic this pattern. She asked me if I could give her basic computer lessons and, in exchange, she offered me basic Xhosa lessons. In this arrangement, we both learnt from and taught each other. In this, each of our “expertises” was recognized and valued by the other person; we recognized that we both have knowledge, and that we both have the power to share that knowledge. Kendall (as cited in Mitchell, 2008: 58) argues that such mutual learning and teaching encourages other giving, receiving and sharing. That sharing occurs is important, so that it is not just “each group doing what it does best” (Stoecker, 2008: 110). One of the primary goals of the Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) movement is that all participants learn knowledge relevant to their immediate experiences (Stoecker, 2008: 111), and knowledge sharing allows for this kind of learning.

Learning and knowledge-sharing that builds on and supports a caring relationship is critical in engaged research. A relationship can be built through so many different activities, and shared

learning experiences can be a very valuable contribution to a relationship, as they illustrate that the 'teacher' cares enough about the 'learner' to be invested in their learning process.

Tabby and I keep missing each other in the weeks after Christmas. I see her this morning after six weeks and we're both filled with news. But first,

"I have a present for you," Tabby tells me smiling. "Well it's a present and not a present."

"That's very mysterious of you..." I reply. We all exchanged gifts last year, so I'm unsure of what to expect.

She laughs and hands me a worn copy of a book titled *Masikhulume isiZulu: Learning Zulu*.

"Hey!" I exclaim happily, turning the book over in her hands, "this is awesome thanks!"

"So it's not Xhosa, but that doesn't matter. Not really. Because you know Xhosa and Zulu are basically the same," she tells me. "And where the words are very different, I wrote the Xhosa words for you next to the Zulu."

I open the book and page through. Lists of verbs, adjectives and nouns. Pages of singular and plural. And down every margin, decorating every page, Tabby's blue-penned handwriting, giving the Xhosa translations where the words are very different. Every margin. Every page. I am overwhelmed.

"We'll work it out together," I hear her say.

Together.

However, there is also a problematic element to reciprocal relationships with regard to flows of knowledge. Thus, I want to move away from my broad points on collaboration and reciprocity and make instead an argument specific to collaboration and reciprocity in the context of knowledge production. The dubious side to mutual learning is, like all the dubiousness I describe in this dissertation, related to the ever-blameable institution. It arises from the dual reality that in South Africa, universities do not only recognize themselves as the primary sources, producers and evaluators of knowledge, but everybody else does too—see Chapter Two. I also described in Chapter Two the other edge to this reality: intelligence in South Africa is equated with formal education, and with race. One of the legislative pillars of the Apartheid state was the Bantu Education Act (1953). The manipulative education that the South African government provided under the Bantu Education Act embedded in the minds of black South Africans that they were not able or competent enough to "know" to the same extent as lighter race groups (Christie, 2009: Chapter Five). Decades and generations later, the internalization of Apartheid era legislation and practice persists as Champion's²⁹ story below illustrates.

Champion and I are standing in the kitchen, waiting for the staff food to be ready. We start up a conversation on the importance of food gardening and I ask him to pause while I run to fetch my notebook. I tell him that what he is saying is important and I want to write it down so that I can remember it. Paradoxically, he is telling me how unimportant people perceive his views to be. I come back with my notebook and he repeats himself carefully:

"When someone comes to you, to tell you what to do, your skin colour and hair colour matter. If you are black, then you can't tell me what to do. I will ask you so many questions:

²⁹ A reminder from Chapter One: Champion is the garden monitor at the Wellness Centre.

who sent you here? Where did you learn this that you are telling me? You will keep asking questions of a black person. If you are white, or Indian or coloured then you will listen to him.”

Without the benefit of Champ’s hand gestures, the previous sentence doesn’t read as it was intended. What he is saying is that if the speaker is white, or Indian or coloured then you will listen to him. That said, he did make another point later on in the conversation that it is mostly black people who mistrust other black people’s knowledge. I asked him why he thinks it is that white people are not asked questions like black people are.

“I don’t know why people don’t have questions for the whites. Instead I will just accept what you say and I don’t ask questions.”

Champion explains that this is why his neighbours do not take him seriously when he tells them that they need to grow veggies at home, that they shouldn’t buy veggies from the Shoprite even though they are cheap.

“You see, they like grass and flowers and it is difficult to get them to change to grow veggies.”

Champion maintains that if he were not a black man telling his neighbours about veggie gardening, they would listen to him. He is not considered knowledgeable in—what he calls—his community. He has done several courses on gardening and permaculture and is employed as a garden monitor, not just a gardener, which he explains is a more senior position that proves he has knowledge and authority. However, his neighbours do not see this: he says they see only that he is black and they do not listen to him. He explained how this is very frustrating for him and he how feels that he is not given the recognition and respect that he deserves.

Embedded in my interaction with Champion is the authority of the university and its representatives to value and validate knowledge, what others have called the “seduction” of knowledge and knowing. Novellino (2003) describes a series of interactions between a group of Batak men—considered in the context Novellino describes as indigenous people with indigenous knowledge—and international development practitioners. He documents how, in those interactions, the Batak men were “seduced” into sharing their knowledge with the outsiders. Through sharing they could prove the value and use of their knowledge because the external experts validated their knowledge (Novellino, 2003: 286). Similarly, I validate Champion’s knowledge. He talked and I wrote his words, asking clarity-seeking questions and treating him as someone who is knowledgeable. Not only am I the only person who has ever done this, but, coming from the university, I am also a person with authority. Something similar happened with Ma’Regina one day, when she was telling me stories about her life in Khayelitsha.

She speaks about the politics that drove her here, and the geography that made the area a place for black people in apartheid. I take notes as she talks, asking for clarification at places,

writing down the repetitions she gives to emphasize a point. Sitting next to me, she can see what I write, and looks over periodically. After a quick-read, she starts laughing.

"Why are you laughing?" I ask her.

"You are writing down everything I say!" she tells me.

"Yes," I answer, "is it still ok with you?" We have previously discussed the research and the process involved, including note-taking.

"Yes, yes." she answers smiling, and carries on with her story, "we had to move when they started building here, we had been here first but when they started to build we had to move. We moved into the garage—whose garage was it? No it doesn't matter—but we moved into the garage and had our meetings there. How long were we there? Two years. Two years. We waited two and a half years for the bungalow to be finished. And then when it was finished, we left the garage and came back here."

I am still taking notes, still writing her words, her expressions, her hand movements and head-shakes. After she has said her last line, I keep writing for another minute, keep filling in a few gaps that are still close enough in memory to be scribbled down. I look up and she laughs again.

"You are *still* writing!"

"Yes! It's an interesting story!"

She looks at me surprised; a question furrows her brow, tautens her neck forward, and articulates itself carefully, "You think so?"

"Yes," it is my turn to laugh incredulously now, "of course it is!"

I wonder if I have seduced the story out of her. On my pencilled-in page, her story is tangible. Her knowledge has become an artefact of value to the university researcher. I borrow a series of questions in which to mix my own: who are our peers in engaged scholarship, who reviews our work and values it, how do we make other people "graders"? (Holland et al, 2010: 24-25 and Taggart: 2007: 56). The point that I am making is that, while I might give the label "knower" and "teacher" to people I interact with at the Wellness Centre, it is only I who has the authority to give that label; without my compliance they have little power to claim it. Being a knower carries a certain weight and power, I offer that power to those at the Wellness Centre, all they have to do is show me that they know. I can seduce information from them, information that they might not have given to a non-university questioner. This thought forces me to reflect on my practice again, and ask myself whether I genuinely believe this to be true. What about the other times that people talked to me?

Ziyanda and I are about to leave the bungalow for the day, everyone is very involved in their own projects and chats and we don't want to complicate their busyness. But Ma'Christine sees us getting our things together and asks: "are you leaving already?"

"Ja-no³⁰ we don't want to bother you!" I answer her.

"No no, come and talk to me."

"Ok," I agree and take my book out again. "What do you want to talk about?"

She gives it a few seconds thought. "I will talk to you about the youngsters." She waits for

³⁰ "ja-no" is a South African expression meaning yes.

me to get settled and watches as I write a heading across a new page. I look at her and nod when I'm ready, and she starts:

"You see in the olden days, youngsters, you could ask them to do things for you. You could ask them and they would listen. You could ask them anything even if they weren't your child and they would listen. Yes, the youngsters you could ask to do anything."

Equivocal. She wanted us to talk to her, but she also wanted to ensure that I wrote her words down, that I considered it a worthwhile story.

Another day, and we've been sitting listening to Ma'Sophie talk animatedly about her late husband. She holds a small beaded tapestry in her hand, and every few minutes looks down and adds another couple of beads to the growing tableau. But her energy is directed to the story, to the day her husband saw her standing on the platform waiting for the train, she was beautiful then, with beautiful hair and beautiful teeth. He saw her standing on the platform and promised himself, "I'll come back for that one!" We all giggle and she tells us about the sweets he brought her, how he didn't like his middle name: Clever.

"He said it wasn't right for him but I tell you he was clever!" She laughs and is interrupted by Ma'Sarah who talks to her in rapid Xhosa. Ziyanda translates that she says it is time for them to go. Ma'Sophie says yes she knows it is past 3pm but she just has one more thing to say. She gets up and starts tidying, putting things away, talking the whole time, telling us about her husband.

When we'd arrived that day, Ma'Regina wanted to know where she had ended her story the previous day. I had written "End Ma'R" in my notes the previous afternoon because she had said that was it, she had nothing more to say. Ziyanda leaned over my book and read aloud to her: "End Ma'R". I smile at her disappointed "oh" face and tell her that if she has more to say I am more than happy to listen.

"Good!" She settles in and asks: "Did I tell you that I did the training for HIV care-work?" She doesn't wait for an answer, "It was with Lady Bebeza and we started with the older people..."

Less equivocal. Maybe I am just being paranoid. Seduction of knowledge? It seems not.

"...but I didn't want to work with children so I stopped going to that project."

"When was this?" I ask Ma'Regina.

"It was before we all came together." Before the ladies were collected and formed the club. I write and write furiously, trying to capture everything that Ma'Regina says...

training to care for people, people HIV+

knows to make food, wash them, must wash them in bed

"come from far in life", learnt much

"Yes, I did the training with Lady Bebeza—heh, but who will write this down when you are finished?" she interrupts herself and asks Ziyanda and I, we laugh together.

"Yes, we all know of the two girls now who come to talk to us!" she says.

I reach for a compromise. "Remember I said I will leave this writing with you, then when we

are gone you'll still have it, and you can talk to each other about it."³¹
Ma'Regina offers a satisfied nod before resuming her story.

I realize that the knowledge sharing between me and the women might not be about validation or seduction; it might just be about making the most of a resource, of someone who can write and record their stories and knowledge and offer them a tangible product to share with others. It might also just be the totally innocuous act of having a conversation with someone: Champion complained to me one morning that no one else talks to him (Champ is not only a little shy but is also very often the only man at a site filled with vivacious women). His comment reminded me that in between all the politics of research, we are all just people who sometimes get bored at work and want someone to talk to.

This one example of ambiguity illustrates that activities and responses to activities can have a range of potential meanings. In order to respond to a particular activity in a way that supports specific engaged research goals, it is necessary to think about the different possible meanings it could have. The argument for 'thinking about' or critical reflection is widely represented in the community engagement literature and I dedicate the final section of this dissertation to a discussion on the role of reflection in my own research.

Critical reflection involves a "critique of the presuppositions on which our beliefs have been built" (Mezirow, 1990: 1). Engaged research as a process has the potential to result in shifts and changes in understanding (Lassiter, 2005a: 92), and researchers need tools to facilitate those shifts. Following this argument, reflective practice entails assessment and potential recalibration of the way in which we approach, interpret, and reason about social facts and realities (Mezirow, 1990: 7). Linked to the Freirean interpretation of praxis, reflective practitioners alternate between engaging with their experiences and theorizing experience in order to change existing and shape new experience. Boyer (1996: 17) argues that this oscillation between practice and theory helps the practitioner to be more responsive to the environments in which they engage.

The impetus behind critical reflection is to facilitate some kind of change, either change of self-practice, or change within an external context. It is helpful to draw on some Freirean ideas to illustrate the point. Freire (2004: 30) argued that in order to change the world—our selves included—we need to reflect on and name the world. His model of "critical consciousness" describes the various phases that an individual goes through to reach the point where they are able

³¹ At this point in the research I had intended to leave the Wellness Centre in a few weeks. Now, almost a year after we had this conversation, I still go to the Seniors' Club to visit every two or three weeks. Ziyanda too goes to visit the women when she can.

to enact some measure of change and challenge the status quo. He outlines three phases of consciousness. Intransitive consciousness refers to the state in which individuals are not conscious of their own abilities to enact change in society, but rather they accept their fate and the power structures that be. In a state of semi-transitive consciousness, individuals are able to engage with social realities in isolation of each other, but are unable to engage with them in their full social context as interconnected realities. In contrast, a critical consciousness equips individuals with the lens and tools necessary to see larger power structures in society, as well as to act against these structures (Shor, 1993: 32; Deans, 1999: 21). Arguably then, it is a critical consciousness that has the potential to contribute—together with other activities—to the social justice agenda of engaged research.

Practically, reflection in research engagement is necessary for a number of other reasons too. When research is linked to some of kind of social change project, the research becomes unpredictable because social change is unpredictable (Stoecker, 2005: 23). Similarly, in societies experiencing high levels of transition and transience, particularly after massive structural change, research responses cannot be static; they must be flexible in design (Holland and Ramaley, 2008: 33), with the potential to shift and to respond to a rapidly changing context. The model of acting, reflecting on action, and using those reflections to introduce new actions and respond to change is also more appropriate in transitional and uncertain contexts than other models that do not include a reflective component and are thus less flexible. The increasingly mutable social context to which institutions and students respond has created a need for what some theorists have referred to as “pedagogy of uncertainty” (Barnett, 2004; 2007). In a growing age of uncertainty, or “supercomplexity”, a different kind of teaching, learning and research must emerge, one that can respond adeptly to the changing social environments in which we live. Essentially, it is a scholarship and a pedagogy that prepares students to *be* in the world in a particular way, not just to know the world, or how to act in the world. Critical reflection is so important because, in this context, an individual needs to understand not only herself, but also how she relates to broader society (Guajardo, 2008: 17). Barnett (2009: 439) argues that to achieve an understanding of *being*, students, and arguably academics too, must be engaged as persons, not knowers. In practice this means developing and nurturing certain dispositions in students, to equip them to thrive in a world that might look very different, very soon, from the one they learn about in class.

Barnett outlines six dispositions that can enable students to engage with the world in a constructive and mutually supporting way: a will to learn; a will to engage; a preparedness to listen; a preparedness to explore and to hold oneself out to new experiences; a determination to keep moving forward; and intellectual humility (Barnett, 2009: 433). In 2000, the Association of

American Colleges and Universities prepared a report on higher education in the 21st century. The report argued that graduates be “intentional about the process of acquiring learning, empowered by the mastery of intellectual practical skills, informed by knowledge from various disciplines and responsible for their actions and those of society” (as cited in Holland and Ramaley, 2008: 37). The report reflects Barnett’s arguments, and the importance of engaging students as social beings, not just members of a university community. In the case of research engagement, where interaction with external communities often goes “beyond the boundaries of professional lives” (Kassam and Tettey, 2003: 166), the importance of *being* in the world in a particular way becomes clear as individual researchers might need to engage communities through multiple identities—my research experience provides one such example. The question of *being* is as much, if not more so, an ontological question as it is an epistemological one (Barnett and Coate, 2005: 149). Interrogating and critiquing *being* requires reflection on the practice of being. Conceptually, it cannot be achieved any other way.

Critical reflection is also very highly valued in anthropology (Schratz and Walker, 1998: 197; and Taggart, 2007: 54). Keene and Colligan (2004: 7) argue that reflection is one of the disciplinary practices from which other disciplines interested in community engagement would do well to learn, particularly in relation to how reflection is included in ethnographic research. Applied anthropologists have argued that part of the ethical obligations of the anthropologist is to reflect critically (Scheper-Hughes in Kellet, 2009: 26). In feminist ethnographic research, self-examination and reflexivity are key components to standpoint epistemology (Huisman, 2008: 373). My point is that critical reflection is widely valued throughout disciplines and sub-disciplines that rely on engagement with external individuals and groups to produce knowledge.

In my case, it has proven helpful to reflect on the various aspects and phases of the research both alone, through journaling and blogging, and with others, through honest conversation. Ziyanda, Lulu and Tabita’s thoughts and comments have forced me to reflect on my own practice and, through their sharing of opinions of how the research was going, I was offered different points of departure to interrogate what was happening. What was most important, however, was for me to reflect and practice simultaneously, to do as Boyer suggested and to alternate between acting, reflecting and acting on my reflections. One of the concrete ways that I included reflection in my research process was to write not just fieldnotes but the actual text contemporaneously with my fieldwork. As months in the field have gone by, I have revisited, reworked and in some cases totally abandoned chunks of text. This method of writing up adds to the argument I laid out in the opening section of this chapter about integrating the research process and product. Through writing contemporaneously, then reflecting on that writing and changing it in response to the other

activities in the research, the product is difficult to separate from the other phases of the research as it was generated at multiple phases of the research.

Using reflection as a tool to generate knowledge enables us to return the first point that I made in this chapter: when reflection, which draws on personal and embodied experience, is viewed as a legitimate channel through which knowledge is created, it bolsters two related claims: (i) embodied experience can constitute knowledge and (ii) all the phases of research—all are sites of reflection—are fertile sites of knowledge. Therefore, when it comes to reaching the engaged research aspiration of recognizing knowledge in unorthodox forms, reflection, which occurs as part of the research process, provides one avenue to do so.

* * *

In response to the institutional barriers that restrict the ways in which the goals of engaged research are realized, I have proposed in this somewhat polemical chapter that viewing all the phases of research as equally important, and that investing time and effort in parts of one's research that are never formally assessed by the institution, enables individual researchers to achieve micro-level goals. These goals include: valuing the knowledge of others, building deep relationships and contributing in small ways to gains in social justice, particularly in relation to the distribution of power between all involved in the research. I have argued that collaboration, reciprocity and service are three practices that shift focus from the knowledge product to other phases of the research and that for this reason, they should form part of an engaged research method. I have concluded the chapter by highlighting the role that critical reflection plays in the research process, and argued that it is important as a tool to create and recognize knowledge in shapes and places that are not usually recognized.

SIX: THE FORWARD-LOOKING UNIVERSITY

I arrive on campus for the Social Responsiveness Symposium and find a familiar face standing at the lunch table.

I grab a plate, start piling on some snacks and ask him, "Why are we the only students here?"

He takes a moment to survey the room. "Nah," he shifts his glass onto his plate to free up his hand and points to door of the lecture theatre, "I think those two there are also students."

"Ok fine, but you get my point. Why aren't there more students?"

He looks at me like it's obvious. "It's vac, Jen."

"Huh?"

"Exams ended last week, campus is dead, everyone's gone home."

"Ah, so it's just us postgrad lurkers left on campus?"

He nods in response and takes another bite of his mini cheese roll.

I see the university's senior management is here; I assume the symposium was organized around their schedules, not around the students'. I smile to myself, shake my head a little.

"What's up?" he asks.

"Nothing." I start to laugh, "let's go sit down."

Why do so few UCT students attend the university's social responsiveness symposium? I feel like I've just wasted 45 000 words. I could have given just a one-line answer: they don't attend because the symposium is organized to accommodate the speechmakers, not the people expected to enact those speeches.

As I begin to conclude this dissertation, I return to the question posed in my introductory chapter: why do so few UCT students attend the university's social responsiveness symposium? It is hopefully clear to the reader that this question symbolizes a far greater set of issues regarding the role of students in community engagement and engaged research. In an attempt to address this set of issues, I have outlined how the institutional obstacles to doing engaged research far outweigh the support that students receive through their institutional membership. In this concluding chapter, I summarize the argument I have articulated in this dissertation, which is that: much as community engagement is touted in national and institutional policy as a valuable, necessary and epistemically worthwhile endeavour, there is insufficient institutional support for this kind of knowledge production, an insufficiency that arises out of both a lack of capacity and a lack of will.

This dissertation has focused on three of the goals or aspirations of engaged research: (i) that it have a social justice orientation and contribute in some way to social transformation; (ii) that it enable and facilitate the building of relationships with external constituencies historically excluded from the university; and (iii) that it recognize and value different kinds of knowledges. I have argued that, as a student at UCT, it is expected that the engaged research I might do should attempt to fulfil these aspirations as far as possible. I have showed that there are a number of institutional obstacles to achieving these goals, and, therefore, that devolving the responsibility of realizing

these aspirations to an individual researcher is both inappropriate and strategically flawed. Chapter Two addressed the first of the goals. I started by outlining the relevant components of national and institutional policy that propose a social justice orientation to engagement. I argued that there are two barriers to achieving this goal, (i) individual researchers have limited capacity to do so, and (ii) it is unclear what constitutes transformation or the ‘common good’. I reflected on the use of research questions in my empirical work to offer an ethnographic illustration of how these obstacles translate in practice.

I came to two primary conclusions in Chapter Two, the first was inspired by a Freirean understanding of self-education, which was that the way in which research is carried out offers opportunities to contribute in positive ways to the lives of research participants. The second was that ‘common good’ engaged research projects do have the potential to contribute in some way to social transformation, or social justice, but not without institutional support. The shape of such support could take on many forms, for example:

- Compiling a map or a catalogue of major research projects across the institution that have outcomes related to social justice or transformation, and highlighting and publicizing areas of intersection
- Facilitating large-scale engaged research projects that require extensive and constant participation from students, and that can be carried over from year to year, thus increasing the possible contribution that the project can make over its lifespan
- Incentivizing—not just encouraging—interdisciplinary projects, with the understanding that the specialized work of each department complements the work of others
- Requiring every department to operationalize—in consultation with their students—the terms ‘transformation’, ‘social justice’ and ‘common good’ in the context of their work and related to their curriculum

Such activities could make it easier for individual students who are interested in doing engaged research, and who are interested in contributing to the common good, to do so in more substantial ways than when they are just one individual trying to meet this goal. The point that I make in Chapter Two, and that I reiterate here, is that an institution aspiring to contribute to social transformation through engaged research, needs to support the individuals who are tasked with enacting this goal.

Chapter Three addressed the second of goal of engaged research, and the obstacles to achieving it, through problematizing the notion of ‘community’ in relation to identity and relationship building. I showed that these three constructs are all changeable, mutually dependent, and variously understood by different members of the research project, whether engaged research or not. I

argued that this mutability can result in two obstacles when it comes to building and nurturing relationships with external constituencies through engaged research: (i) in cases where individual and institutional understandings of community are not aligned or in tension it is unclear with whom relationships should be built, and (ii) there are instances where institutionally ascribed identity is not conducive to building the kind of equitable and respectful relationships to which is aspired. I used three manifestations of 'community' in my own research to add ethnographic evidence to this argument: the community is black, the community is not what management thinks it is, and the community is silence. In terms of relationships and identity, I considered the salience of race in my research, as well as the role in my research of the pre-existing meanings attached to the relationships between *mama* and *ntombezana* that I was able to engage. I concluded Chapter Three by highlighting that for an individual researcher to contribute to an institutional relationship with a group understood to be a community; the individual and the institution need to have a solid relationship, one that is characterised by a shared understanding of 'community', and a shared understanding of how to relate to that community.

In Chapter Four, I addressed goals two and three by arguing that the institutional business of generating knowledge has the potential, in some instances, to be in tension with the goal of building relationships, and that institutionalized knowledge practices tend to make it difficult to recognize and value alternative knowledge and knowers. I outlined what it means for knowledge to be bound by institutional norms and practices, and focused particularly on disciplinization; the disembodiment of knowledge; and the pressure on producing a knowledge product that fulfils specific criteria. I argued too that it is possible to embrace or prefer one system of knowledge without necessarily devaluing others, and thus that it is possible for the university to stick with the knowledge it is comfortable producing while still recognizing the value of other knowledges. My point here is that changes in attitude and practice might lessen the epistemic power of the university, without necessarily lessening the role that it has to play in producing knowledge. Mirroring the conclusion of Chapter Two, I emphasized again that recognizing as 'knowledge' only the research product, and so assigning value only that product, fails to take into account the knowledge that is created through various activities, and by various people, throughout the research process.

To summarize, in Chapters Two, Three and Four, I established six obstacles to achieving three of the goals of engaged research, the obstacles are:

- Individual researchers have limited capacity to contribute to social transformation
- Transformation is so underdefined it is unclear to the researcher when or whether they have achieved this goal

- Institutional and individual understandings of ‘community’ can be in tension to the point that research relationships are compromised
- Institutionally endorsed identities like ‘researcher’ or ‘ethnographer’ can make building relationships with communities difficult
- When weighed against the production of knowledge, relationship building is the lesser valued activity of the two
- Institutionalized knowledge practices make it difficult to recognize and value alternative knowledges

I concluded that insufficient action from institutions broadly, and UCT specifically, to change their practice translates to individual researchers being undersupported in their engaged research efforts. Whether this insufficient action and subsequent insufficient support is due to a lack of capacity or lack of will is debateable. Institutional policy seems to illustrate that there is a will to make engaged research an institutional priority, however, as Holland and Ramaley (2008: 41) point out:

unless the institution’s academic staff members and leaders embrace engagement as a key strategic value and as legitimate scholarly work, and then back up those commitments with both moral support and concrete resources, engagement will remain individually defined and sporadic. Limited interventions and occasional programmes cannot attract community partnerships or influence larger systems on a scale necessary to create change in communities.

I am neither an academic staff member nor an institutional leader, it is easy for me to have felt during my research somewhat disempowered and disillusioned. However, as I discussed in Chapter Five, there are some actions that an individual engaged researcher can take to do the kind of research outlined by national and institutional policy. The point of my argument in Chapter Five was that the entire fieldwork process, not just the resulting product from that fieldwork, defines ‘research’. Accepting this as a premise, I introduced three activities that I believe can support a focus on process: collaboration, reciprocity, and service. I explained how these activities nurture relationships including mutual learning relationships, which in turn facilitate flows of knowledge. Embracing these three activities allows for the researcher to act in ways that are socially just, and it allows for a student like me to practice the citizenship skills and values that UCT wants its graduates to have mastered.

In my research, I have tried to implement an abstracted model of engaged research in order to show that much as community engagement is touted in national and institutional policy as a valuable, necessary and epistemically worthwhile endeavour, there is insufficient institutional

support for this kind of knowledge production, an insufficiency that arises out of both a lack of capacity and a lack of will. I attempted to take some of the constructs and ideas related to engaged research, and community engagement more broadly, and translate them into practice. I have mostly struggled. I took three goals of engaged research and tried to meet them. I came up against a number of obstacles, six of which I described in this dissertation. However, as much as I struggled, I do not think I failed. It is not impossible to do engaged research, even in the current institutional climate. It is for this reason that I end this dissertation hopeful. If engaged research can be implemented with positive results despite the institution, it excites me to imagine what engaged research could look like if it had the comprehensive support of the institution.

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