

The Perception of Effective Community Engagement: A Case Study in a New
Zealand Public Library

by

Sam Graeme Depree Ludemann

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Victoria University of Wellington
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Abstract

Research Problem

Rhetoric relating to the concept of community engagement (CE) is well established internationally within the public libraries sector and has become common-place within New Zealand public libraries. Despite this there is no New Zealand framework for best practice or consideration of how existing international frameworks would be appropriate within a local, bicultural context. Furthermore, there is little understanding of how practitioners in New Zealand perceive effective CE. The implications of this is that the concept is vulnerable to inconsistencies in its application which has an impact on the way public libraries support participatory citizenship.

Methodology

A qualitative case-study was employed drawing on symbolic interactionism. A large New Zealand Library organisation was selected as the 'case' and data was collected through eight semi-structured interviews with Team Leaders and documentary analysis of internal strategic documents. Data was analysed using inductive thematic analysis.

Results

Team Leaders possessed an intuitive conceptual understanding of the essential elements of effective CE. However, predictably without a shared vision, the practical application of CE was problematic with the provision and consumption of library services being attributed to community participation, indistinct from initiatives involving true community partnership. A high proportion of the CE undertaken by the organisation therefore supported the citizen-consumer model of citizenship rather than emphasising the public citizen model.

Implications

This study supports the view that a shared vision is instrumental in achieving a consistent approach to CE. It makes a strong case for the creation of a local, New Zealand model of CE that takes into account the discourse related to the public sphere, demonstrating the overall impact and principal benefactors of CE work. Further research should include how the community and in particular, Māori perceived effective participation and partnership with libraries.

Keywords

Public Libraries – Community Engagement – Citizenship – Public Sphere

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Table of Contents

<u>1.0</u>	<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>6</u>
1.1	TOPIC STATEMENT	6
1.2	DEFINITIONS	7
<u>2.0</u>	<u>LITERATURE REVIEW</u>	<u>8</u>
2.1	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES	8
2.2	LIBRARIES, CITIZENSHIP AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE	12
2.3	SUMMARY AND RELEVANCE	15
<u>3.0</u>	<u>RESEARCH DESIGN</u>	<u>16</u>
3.1	RESEARCH QUESTION	16
3.2	RESEARCH DESIGN	17
<u>4.0</u>	<u>METHODOLOGY</u>	<u>18</u>
4.1	POPULATION AND SAMPLE	18
4.2	DATA COLLECTION.....	18
4.3	DATA ANALYSIS	19
4.4	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS & LIMITATIONS.....	20
<u>5.0</u>	<u>RESULTS</u>	<u>21</u>
5.1	DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS	21
5.2	KEY THEMES IN THE PERCEPTION OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	22
5.2.1	RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS	23
5.2.2	PROVISION OF SERVICE	25
5.2.3	PERSONAL BELIEFS.....	26
5.2.4	PERSONAL CAPACITY/INVESTMENT.....	27
5.2.5	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	28
5.2.6	ANECDOTAL AFFIRMATION OF SUCCESS.....	29
5.2.7	COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF LIBRARY SERVICES & LIBRARY STAFF AWARENESS OF COMMUNITY.....	30
<u>6.0</u>	<u>DISCUSSION</u>	<u>31</u>
<u>7.0</u>	<u>CONCLUSION</u>	<u>35</u>

8.0	REFERENCES	37
9.0	APPENDICES	41
9.1	PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET	41
9.2	PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM	42
9.3	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	43
9.4	CODING SAMPLE WITH KEY THEMES	44
9.5	RESPONDENT VALIDATION SAMPLE CODING SHEET	46

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Topic Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine how the concept of effective community engagement (CE) is perceived within a large New Zealand (NZ) public library organisation and the implications that these perceptions have on the relationship the library has with its public. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with branch library Team Leaders and Associate Team Leaders as well as documentary analysis. Most existing studies examine the phenomenon of CE in libraries in the United Kingdom (UK) or North America, however, there is a dearth of research on the topic focusing on NZ libraries making it difficult to understand how CE is perceived and practiced in NZ.

International efforts around CE have included libraries in the UK making considerable investment in CE programmes through the Big Lottery Fund's Community Libraries Project (Renaisi Ltd, 2011, p. 7), a consortium of libraries in Canada producing the community-led libraries toolkit (Working Together Project, 2008) and the American Library Association's (ALA) "Libraries Transforming Communities" initiative (American Library Association, n.d.). Despite this international trend and the well-established rhetoric relating to CE that exists within the NZ public library sector (Auckland Council, 2013, p. 13; Libraries Aotearoa, 2015; Palmerston North City Council, 2013, p. 10; Public Libraries of New Zealand, n.d.; The Association of Public Libraries Managers Inc., 2012, p. 25), there is a noticeable absence of any substantial framework or cohesive strategy for NZ public libraries to guide CE and advocate best practice. The term has reached NZ and has been adopted without apparent pause for a strategic vision or even an understanding of how it might intersect with local bicultural practices. Furthermore, there is an absence of literature that examines the perceptions underpinning CE initiatives and how this informs the relationship a public library has with its public. Without this understanding, CE frameworks lack the ability to engender a critical awareness of who the primary benefactors of CE are – the wider community or the library organisation itself.

CE is widely considered a desirable undertaking as libraries seek to turn outwards and respond to their communities while upholding the public library mandate to safeguard participatory citizenship (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1994). Despite this, a consistent practical application remains elusive. Irrespective of rhetoric, there is also scant understanding of how practitioners' own perceptions of effective CE impact on the way services are received and

ultimately on the relationship between public libraries and their public; a relationship that informs the role that libraries play in a democratic society. If libraries are to reach an agreed position on CE and the desired outcomes, more work needs to be done to understand the impact that practitioners' perceptions of effective CE have on the way it is conducted and ultimately on the position of libraries in society. The findings of this study are relevant to the development of a consistent CE framework for NZ Libraries through a better understanding of how the concept has been interpreted and applied in New Zealand. The findings will also contribute to an enhanced understanding of the relationship that CE has to enabling the fulfilment of democratic citizenship.

1.2 Definitions

CE is a concept closely related with the terms, community development or community building. In 2005, The United Nations (UN) and the Government of the State of Queensland produced what is known as the Brisbane Declaration on Community Engagement which recognised that:

...meaningful community engagement seeks to address barriers and build the capacity and confidence of people to participate in, and negotiate and partner with, institutions that affect their lives, in particular those previously excluded or disenfranchised (2005, p. 2).

The perceived alignment of CE principles such as this and the goals of public libraries is well established within the profession, particularly in regards to encouraging civic participation and reducing barriers to information and learning for all members of the community (Scott, 2011, p. 195; Sung et al., 2013, p. 206; The Association of Public Libraries Managers Inc., 2012, p. 20). Finding a clear and consistent definition of CE within the profession is less straight forward with the concept falling anywhere on a continuum ranging from an outreach activity to active community participation and shared decision making (Sarkissian & Hofer, 2009, p. 47; Working Together Project, 2008, p. 14).

Central to this enquiry is the concept of **community** which for the purposes of this study is defined using McMillan's and Chavis's (1986) definition as described by Almgren (2001), which states that community can be territorial or relational as long as four elements are present: "membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs, and shared emotional connection". This definition means the concept of community includes, but isn't restricted by, physical boundaries and can include virtual communities as well as any other community of interest. Morse (2014) adds to our

understanding by describing the concept of community as evolving around three points: “community of relationships, the community of interests, and the community of place” (2014, p. 33).

The concept of the **public** is also important in positioning this study. Buschman (2017) claims there are many publics which are distinct from community described above, notably through the absence of “affective bonds and shared history” (2017, p. 56). The concept of “stranger-relationality” is a key factor underpinning a public – where strangers come together and participate in a discourse directed at “indefinite others” (Warner, 2002, pp. 56–58 as found in Buschman, 2017, p. 56). Buschman (2017) concludes that a public comes into being when a group self-organises and engages in reflective discourse with an investment in the outcomes of certain decisions. The term ‘public’ has a close relationship to ideas regarding citizenship and democratic participation, in particular through the notion of the public sphere; a public opinion-forming participatory arena that will be discussed at depth in the literature review. Public libraries, as publically funded institutions have an inherent relationship with their public; a practical embodiment of this relationship can be characterised as CE.

2.0 Literature Review

Relevance for this literature review was determined by the clarity of research objectives, suitability of research design and the degree to which the studies sought to understand the phenomenon of CE in public libraries. In addition to this, literature that examined the concept of citizenship and the public in relation to libraries was also explored. The first section of this review deals with the former; literature that directly addresses the concept of CE, before examining the theoretical arguments related to a library’s public. Studies that advocated for the role libraries have in community development were excluded as the intention of this study is not to determine the value of public libraries but the way in which they interact with their communities to encourage greater participation.

2.1 Community Engagement and Public Libraries

All but one of the studies reviewed occurred within the last ten years and despite seeking a range of studies from across the globe, the most relevant and high-quality studies focused on the UK or North American experience with two Australian exceptions (Blackburn, 2014, 2017). *Open to all?: The public library and social exclusion* (Muddiman, D., Durrani, S., Dutch, M., Linley, R., Pateman, J., &

Vincent, J. 2000) is a study that is now 17 years old, however it remains an important piece of work that has informed the development of community-led library practice in the UK and has led directly to the development of the notable Canadian initiative: Community-led Libraries Toolkit (Working Together Project, 2008). As this study has impacted public library policy in the UK (Pateman & Williment, 2013, p. 8), where the majority of quality CE research has taken place it is deemed appropriate to include it in this review. The state-funded evaluation report, *Community engagement in public libraries: an evaluation update of the Big Lottery Fund's Community Libraries Programme* (Renaissi Ltd, 2011) has also been included due to the impressive scale of mixed method research undertaken in the evaluation which is concerned specifically with the outcomes of CE in UK public libraries, how CE is understood and how the UK experience can inform library policy; all of which aligns with the research objectives of this study. Studies were retrieved by searching library and information science specific databases such as EBSCO's Library and Information Science Abstracts and ProQuest's Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts. References from relevant articles were used along with Google Scholar's citation index to find recent studies.

The literature related to libraries and CE tended to fall into two categories; those that investigated the practical application of CE within libraries and those that considered the role of libraries and the relationship libraries have with their communities. For Goulding (2009), Sung & Hepworth (2013) and Renaissi Ltd (2011) the key research objective was determining how library authorities were performing in relation to established models of CE. Sung et al, (2013) alternatively and uniquely sought to determine the essential elements of successful CE initiatives from the perspective of the library, community and partner organisations. All of these studies, along with Reid & Howard (2016), acknowledge the popular use of the term, CE, but an inconsistent investment in all CE aspects or a lack of understanding by practitioners of meaningful CE. Each of these studies sought to ascertain how libraries have translated the concept of CE into genuine initiatives as well as understanding what the measureable outcomes are from this effort.

Open to all? (Muddiman et al., 2000) predates the other studies by a decade and was primarily concerned with the intersection between social exclusion and public library services. The study sought to understand the capacity for libraries to respond to the shrinking diversity of its user-base and growing social isolation of community groups despite the public library mandate to provide services to all. It sought to determine the current attitude and practice in regards to social exclusion and then ultimately to determine a framework of best practice. The findings of *Open to all?* (Muddiman et al., 2000) was that CE formed an essential part of the strategy to respond to social

exclusion. The phenomenon of social exclusion has continued to inform discourse around CE and public libraries (Ingraham, 2015; Mehra & Srinivasan, 2007; Willingham, 2008) with participation and civic engagement being the underlying principles driving CE efforts.

The research methods used to investigate the occurrence of CE and experience of practitioners was a combination of surveys and questionnaires as well as the use of semi-structured interviews. The studies that relied solely on qualitative data gained through interviews and direct observation combined this with document analysis and literature review (Goulding, 2009; Sen, 2014; Sung & Hepworth, 2013; Sung, Hepworth, & Ragsdell, 2013). Goulding's (2009) study involved qualitative interviews with 50 practitioners throughout the UK while the two large-scale studies, Muddiman et al. (2000) and Renaisi Ltd, (2011) were more concerned with creating generalizable results, so used a mixed-method approach of quantitative surveys, documentary analysis as well as multiple qualitative case studies subjected to comparative analysis. The majority of the remaining literature tended to focus on specific case studies (Blackburn, 2014; Ingraham, 2015; Reid & Howard, 2016; Sen, 2014; Sung & Hepworth, 2013; Sung et al., 2013). The use of case studies throughout most of the literature was highly appropriate because it enabled data to be gathered on the same organisation or CE initiative from multiple perspectives; acknowledging that even within the context of one example of CE, experiences can vary.

Several of the studies reviewed (Muddiman et al., 2000; Renaisi Ltd, 2011; Sung et al., 2013) drew on an inductive theoretical position, using the data gained through the study to build a framework for what CE looks like in practice. The Sung et al (2013) study used a grounded theory that provided a valuable new CE framework which focuses on the experience of all stakeholders rather than the service provider. Alternatively a deductive theory based on established CE criteria was used to measure how libraries are embracing the concept of CE and applying it to their planning and delivery of services (Goulding, 2009; Renaisi Ltd, 2011; Sen, 2014; Sung & Hepworth, 2013). The studies by Mehra & Srinivasan, (2007), Muddiman et al. (2000) Willingham (2008) and the Working Together Project (2008) used critical theory to challenge normative library service models and advocate participation and social change.

In all the studies reviewed the issue of a consistent understanding and application of CE throughout library authorities and even within an organisation was highlighted. Despite national strategies and toolkits designed to direct the efforts of libraries there remained a large degree of ambiguity as to what constituted quality CE (Renaisi Ltd, 2011, p. 14) and the appropriate level of community

involvement (Sung & Hepworth, 2013, p. 41). The issue of passivity was a central theme – both in relation to libraries seeing the community as “passive beneficiaries and recipients” (Sung & Hepworth, 2013, p. 41) of CE efforts, particularly in the design and planning stage, to libraries themselves seeing the provision of resources or space as sufficient examples of CE (Goulding, 2009, p. 42). This was seen as an issue with a more interventionist approach called for with the explicit goal of “facilitating the creation of social capital” (Blackburn, 2014, p. 123), that is promoting civic participation and community influence generally (Ingraham, 2015; Willingham, 2008), or specifically in relation to issues of equality and working for social change (Mehra & Srinivasan, 2007; Muddiman et al., 2000; Scott, 2011; Working Together Project, 2008). A more direct involvement from the community in the planning, design and provision of services was advocated through a spectrum of participation that began with informing or educating the community at one end and flowed through to an ideal state of empowering or collaborating with the community at the other (Goulding, 2009, p. 39; Ramachandra & Mansor, 2014, p. 590; Working Together Project, 2008, p. 16). Several studies then used a model outlining various aspects of CE within a library context designed to guide efforts (Goulding, 2009; Renaisi Ltd, 2011; Sen, 2014; Sung & Hepworth, 2013). These included aspects such as, “the library as a space for community activities” and “involvement of volunteers” (Goulding, 2009, p. 40). In contrast to this was Sung et al. (2013) who focused on the intrinsic qualities of successful and sustainable CE from the perspective of all stakeholders. Seven essential elements were identified: belonging, commitment, communication, a flexible approach, genuineness, relevance and sustainability (2013, p. 211), which places emphasis on the quality of CE efforts rather than the context. Furthermore, Sung et al. (2013) found that CE initiatives that are instigated organically by the community, rather than by the service provider, were more sustainable and achieved increased buy-in from the community (2013, p. 215). Blackburn’s (2014) investigation into an initiative at Libraries ACT supports these findings with the essential element of a ‘flexible approach’ in particular seen as important as the library organisation responds to community needs and expectations. Blackburn’s (2017) further analysis of CE initiatives, using the Sung and Hepworth (2013) model, acknowledged that although all essential elements can be present, how evenly they are represented has a bearing on the success of the initiative. Additional success factors not captured by Sung and Hepworth (2013) relate to hierarchical equivalence of the community group and library authority, cultural competence of library staff and alignment of the aims of all stakeholders involved (Blackburn, 2017, p. 11).

The ‘participatory library’ is a related concept explored in the literature that in particular describes processes which allow community input in to core library activities such as cataloguing, collection development, digital content creation and strategic planning (Nguyen, Partridge, & Edwards, 2012,

p. 341). These activities relate to CE in the sense that communities have some input into the administration of library services however the literature tends to focus more on the digital sphere and digital communities and is characterised by a service-led mentality. In a service-led model, the provision of space, running programmes, undertaking outreach or interacting with patrons serves to “educate and engage communities” (Jaeger, Taylor, & Gorham, 2015, p. 65) embodying a top-down approach (Sung & Hepworth, 2013) and one that occupies the very beginning of the CE spectrum mentioned previously. Sen’s (2014) study highlighted the value of this interpretation of CE in rejuvenating a library authority, however, the study failed to explore or comment on the power imbalance that exists when CE efforts are purely service provider driven rather than a genuine library/community partnership (Ramachandra & Mansor, 2014, p. 595; Sung & Hepworth, 2013, p. 41). Successful examples of CE are highlighted where the community is placed at the centre of planning and design and the library in the role of facilitator, rather than leader, resulting in far greater levels of sustainability through community buy-in (Sung & Hepworth, 2013, p. 41; Sung et al., 2013, p. 215). Library staff buy-in to CE philosophies was also highlighted as a key aspect of CE success and yet despite existing models to inform efforts there remains apprehension and wariness for many indicating leadership and organisational culture within the profession remains a high priority (Goulding, 2009, p. 40; Renaisi Ltd, 2011, p. 25; Sen, 2014, p. 515; Sung & Hepworth, 2013, p. 45).

2.2 Libraries, Citizenship and the Public Sphere

Pertinent to the underlying motivations for a library undertaking CE is the understanding of citizenship and the public sphere. The question of what relationship a public library has with its community, publics or citizens and more importantly how does a library support a particular model of citizenship through services and rhetoric leads to a deeper understanding of how and why CE is enacted. The literature which considers this relationship uses the concept of the public sphere (Habermas, 1989) as a frame of reference. In general, however, the body of Library and Information Studies literature that focuses on citizenship is relatively sparse (Buschman, 2007; Johannsen, 2015, p. 63).

The consumer/customer paradigm and the commodification of information has been used to inform discussion on library services since the 1980s (Johannsen, 2015, p. 30). Budd’s (1997) critique, two decades ago, succinctly highlighted the inconsistency and incompatibility of this economic rhetoric with the underlying purpose of libraries and continues to be cited in current literature. Budd (1997)

contends that information and library services characterised by 'exchange-value' rather than 'use-value' leads ultimately to the privileging of certain sectors of society that can deliver the most material success for the library in terms of transactions (1997, p. 317) and a focus on individual wants over the collective needs of the whole (1997, p. 312). All of which undermines a sense of public good and services intended for the benefit of the whole community. For Budd, the use of economic language is more than semantics – it informs and shapes the purpose of libraries. Johannsen (2015) supports Budd's (1997) position when he examines the use of metaphors as a device to understand a library's public and demonstrates how these metaphors lead to vastly different services and desired outcomes.

The Habermasian concept of the public sphere (Calhoun, 1992) has been linked to public libraries in a substantive way since the mid-90's (Widdersheim & Koizumi, 2016, p. 594) and continues to inform discourse on the relationship public libraries have with the concept of citizenship and the public. The public sphere is defined as the collective and democratic space that exists between the state and private needs; a space where communication is pivotal in enabling critical and rational discourse (Buschman, 2003, pp. 42–47). Ultimately a public sphere serves, "as an interchange arena where private actors raise issues of public concern so that the values may be translated into and institutionalized within the system" (Widdersheim & Koizumi, 2016, p. 593). The functioning of this phenomenon is highly dependent upon neutral, quality information that can inform rational debate and public opinion – an essential condition undermined by commercial and political agendas which for Habermas, ultimately leads to the downfall of a public sphere altogether (Webster, 2007, p. 167). For Webster, who first substantively connected Habermas's concept to libraries in the publication, *Theories of the Information Society* (1995); public libraries are the truest modern embodiment of the public sphere with their commitment to impartial information being made, "available to everyone, access being guaranteed without cost to individuals" (2007, p. 176).

Library research literature has tended to focus on how the library facilitates public sphere communication or on the public library as an issue of public sphere communication (Widdersheim, 2017). Widdersheim & Koizumi (2016) synthesise the literature that connects public libraries to the public sphere and then using a case study on a North American library authority, construct a new conceptual model of the public sphere in public libraries, which is useful to inform discussion on CE. For Widdersheim & Koizumi (2016) libraries have a role to play in enabling public spheres, specifically in relation to three key arenas – Intra-library, inter-library and external, which

correspond to the discourse of governance and management, legitimation and commons (2016, p. 604):

In the intra- library dimension, the library collects and organizes discourse; in the inter-library dimension, the library legitimates itself before its public; and in the external public sphere dimension, the library facilitates discourse within the larger public sphere...Each of these three functional/discursive pairs forms an arena of public sphere discourse that connects the library to its community (2016, pp. 603–604).

Although not referring to CE specifically, this conceptual model of the public sphere and libraries contributes an additional frame of reference for how CE is enacted. Using this model, CE efforts relate to the communicative process with citizens and the community in regards to governance and management; legitimation; and commons and would be measured by the level of openness, debate and common concern inherent within the process. In other words, citizens would have input into how a library is run, the types of services on offer and would be equipped to participate in broader societal discourse relating to issues of common concern.

Relating to Budd's (1997) position, the public sphere concept has also been used to challenge neo-liberal practices in regards to library management. Buschman (2003), beginning in 2003 and then throughout the proceeding years, has drawn on public sphere theory to evoke an impassioned cry for libraries to reposition themselves in opposition to a market orientated and 'private need' obsessed new public philosophy as described by Wolin (1981). Buschman (2003) argues that libraries are under threat by the continual erosion of the public sphere by economic instruments and discourse framed in economic terms. Collections and services from this vantage are provided in "exchange" for the "material success of the library" (2003, p. 110) and "customer satisfaction" (2003, p. 170) is valued above wider social value. Buschman's (2003) thesis draws connections between the public sphere and the core function of the public library which is concerned with preserving inclusive and participatory democracy; engaging the public in, "rational dialogue about what it should be in light of democratic public purposes"(2003, p. 180).

Biesta (2014) also draws on Habermas's public sphere to consider the concept of democratic citizenship. For Biesta (2014), the concept of citizenship is most authentically understood in the political sense where plurality and difference underpin the democratic process. The public sphere is not simply an arena but the very act of, "transformation of individual 'wants' into collectively justifiable and supportable 'needs'"(2014, p. 67), a transformative act distinct from private or

economic relations. Like Buschman, Biesta argues that market logic, namely in the form of 'choice' interferes with this democratic, participatory act. Citizens are transformed into consumers through the appeal to private wants, negating the opportunity for transformation: "It is about the selection from a set menu, rather than that it entails collective involvement in what should be on the menu in the first place" (2014, p. 102). According to Biesta, providing choice disempowers collective action by speaking directly to private wants rather than collective needs. This argument strengthens Buschman's (2007) & Budd's (1997) positions which bring into question the measures of success and ultimately the principal benefactors of library services – the material success of the library itself based on outcomes such as membership and event attendance or the community through other impact measures.

Ingraham (2015) explores the concepts of the public sphere, citizenship and libraries by examining the recent funding crisis and subsequent library closures in the UK. For Ingraham (2015), the interactions between citizens and their libraries, through participatory decision making or even through consumer choice has a direct role in shaping the very nature of citizenship. He uses the citizen-consumer and public-citizen paradigm to consider the importance of the relationship libraries have with their public in determining how library services are provided. The citizen-consumer enacts their citizenship through consuming; a market orientated position. The public-citizen enacts their citizenship through participation; engaging as Biesta (2014) would have it, in the transformative act. Both positions encourage a vastly different response from a library charged with cultivating citizenship. CE promoting the public-citizen model would result in community participation in the planning, design and delivery of services. Conversely, responding to a community using the citizen-consumer model privileges library use and a service-led relationship with the community.

2.3 Summary and relevance

The central issues raised in the literature are the commitment to the concept of CE from library authorities and the shared understanding of the aspects and intrinsic qualities of successful CE. The literature demonstrates that the interpretation of CE can be influenced by the library's rhetoric and the underlying metaphor used to define 'the public', which means the essential question isn't whether a library is undertaking CE, but rather who the principal benefactors of the CE ultimately are. If a library aspires to fulfil the social role of safeguarding democratic participation by all members of society through CE that builds social capital or addresses social exclusion, then it is clear

that the way in which citizens are described and the evaluative processes put in place will have a significant role in influencing outcomes.

Although it has now been 16 years since *Open to All?* (Muddiman et al., 2000) recommended the wholesale embracing of CE philosophies and 10 years since library authorities in the UK produced their own frameworks, quality CE has yet to be consistently understood and implemented within the library profession. Unlike the UK, NZ public libraries have never had a CE toolkit, defined criteria or national strategy to measure and guide CE efforts, as a result issues of inconsistency highlighted in the UK studies will almost certainly apply in NZ. As inconsistency of implementation and understanding was considered a real barrier to meaningful change in the way libraries embrace CE philosophies, it makes establishing an agreed framework all the more important for NZ libraries. Pre-existing frameworks can be used to inform discussion within a NZ context, however producing a framework that is specific to NZ and takes into account the bicultural nature of public services as well as the multicultural communities they serve would be the most appropriate outcome from local research. In addition, most CE literature and models to date have neglected the highly relevant discourse on public libraries and the public sphere, which should act as a point of reference for a new CE framework, particularly in regards to articulating outcomes and impact measures. The conclusions drawn from multiple studies (Goulding, 2009, p. 40; Renaisi Ltd, 2011, p. 25; Sen, 2014, p. 515; Sung & Hepworth, 2013, p. 45) on the importance of enabling library staff buy-in is highly relevant to my research method. As I'll be interviewing Team Leaders an important question will be how CE ideas are encouraged or transmitted within teams.

3.0 Research Design

3.1 Research Question

Considering the research gaps within a NZ context the following research question has been developed:

How do Team Leaders in a New Zealand public library perceive effective community engagement?

The sub-problems to this question which guide data collection and analysis are:

- How do Team Leaders define CE and communicate this concept to their teams?

- What are the conditions or interactions that influence Team Leaders' perceptions of quality CE?
- How do they practically apply their ideas of CE?
- How is CE planned and prioritized?
- How do Team Leaders evaluate CE initiatives?

3.2 Research Design

A qualitative case study design has been deemed the most appropriate as the topic is not well understood within a NZ context and this method is particularly suited to exploring the complexity of a phenomenon and providing preliminary findings to inform subsequent hypotheses (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015, p. 272). The study will use a large public library organisation as the 'case', which means the organization itself will be a focus of the study, rather than merely a backdrop to the sampling process or findings (Bryman, 2012, p. 68). The organisation's identity has been kept confidential.

The theoretical position of this study draws on Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism, in which the complex interaction between all stakeholders in the organisation and community informs how the CE concept is perceived by individual practitioners and also consensually within the organization. The focus of this study is as much about the 'how' as it is about the 'what' so attention is paid not only to the behaviours of the Team Leaders in relation to CE but "their own perception and interpretation of those behaviours" (Davetian, 2010, p. 192). This position aligns well with case study research where the specific context as well as the complex interactions occurring between all stakeholders contribute to the interpretation and analysis of the data. Although this theoretical position is common for case study research, only one of the reviewed studies on CE used this approach (Sung et al., 2013). Practically, symbolic interactionism informs both data collection and analysis. Documentary analysis was used to better understand the environmental rhetoric on CE that Team Leaders are likely to be in contact with. During the interviews, questions explored the context to a Team Leader's perceptions by seeking to understand significant influences and how perceptions are communicated, reaffirmed and valued in the organisation. Data was gathered that doesn't just demonstrate what CE is taking place but why Team Leaders believe this to be effective CE. When the data was analysed themes that help describe how perceptions are influenced were explored as well as the broader themes that characterise effective CE for Team Leaders.

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Population and sample

The library organisation was chosen as the case study because it can be considered a representative of a large library network engaged in a broad range of library services through multiple branch libraries, an outreach service and a programmes and learning service. Activities that could objectively be understood as CE using any of the models explored in the literature review (Goulding, 2009; Renaisi Ltd, 2011; Scott, 2011; Sen, 2014; Sung & Hepworth, 2013) are already occurring, however, since this study is concerned with the process of how they are occurring it forms an appropriate context to explore the stated research questions. The management structure of the organisation is such that each of the branch libraries and two service teams report to one of 15 Team Leaders who in turn report to a Community Library Manager then the Libraries and Information Unit Manager. Each Team Leader, in collaboration with their Community Library Manager is able to set the strategic direction for their community library, influencing the focus and efforts of their team and specific services offered to their communities within the bounds of broader policy and strategic imperatives. Associate Team Leaders are also included in this study because in many cases they also inform the strategic direction of library teams and are often the sole-charge of smaller branch libraries. Therefore, Team Leaders and Associate Team Leaders were determined to be the most suitable participants for the purposes of this study. For the remainder of the report they are collectively referred to as Team Leaders. Information regarding the management structure and relative autonomy of Team Leaders in other library organisations is not readily available so it can't be said that this structure is necessarily representative of NZ public libraries.

4.2 Data collection

A semi-structured interview method was chosen because it allowed the interviews to be framed by key questions and the responses to be easily compared with other interviewees, but there was still flexibility to gain unexpected insights by probing responses with unplanned follow-up questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015, p. 12). Eight one-hour interviews were conducted: six Team Leaders and two Associate Team Leaders, which allowed sufficient data to be generated to draw conclusions about the organisation. In addition to this, documents relating to organisational strategy, position descriptions or CE initiatives were examined using documentary analysis techniques in order to

provide further insight and also to enable triangulation of data. Finally, the technique of respondent validation was used where a coding sample (see appendix 9.5) was taken back to each participant to test that the interpretation of their words aligns with their experiences (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015, p. 106). All participants responded and approved the coding decisions.

4.3 Data analysis

Inductive thematic analysis was used to analyse the text data from transcribed interviews. Although there are various models of CE for public libraries, the goal of this case-study research was to determine the perceptions of CE within a single organization, which can inform the potential development of a NZ specific model. Therefore themes will come directly from the data rather than from a pre-existing model or theoretical position (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). Nvivo software was used during data analysis to refine, group and present themes for interpretation. The following steps of thematic analysis were followed as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 87):

1. Familiarisation with data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Familiarisation involved the researcher transcribing the interview data and a process of reading through the transcripts multiple times. The purpose was to gain a detailed understanding of the nuances and details of the data. Initial codes were either created directly from the interview text or in some cases a term was chosen which reflected a complex passage of text. Since this study is informed by symbolic interactionism and is concerned with how CE operates within the organisation; informed by the interactions and perceptions of individuals, a constructionist approach was used focusing on latent themes/ideas within the text (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 85). Codes then informed the construction of broader themes (see appendix 9.4), which were then reviewed to ensure validity before being defined and linked to the overall context of the research question.

Drawing on symbolic interactionism, it is important to understand how Team Leaders are constructing their meanings of community engagement and to consider the wider organisation rhetoric that can inform this position. Documents were selected that reference the concept of

community engagement directly or that are significant in informing the interaction between the library and the community. These included position descriptions of Team Leaders, Associate Team Leaders, qualified librarian positions and Library Assistants. It has included internal strategic documents belonging to the organisation, as well as broader strategic documents produced on behalf of NZ public libraries that are referenced or widely circulated within the organisation. Since the volume of relevant documents was relatively small, the documents were studied in their entirety (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015, p. 275). Rather than counting the frequency of relevant terms inductive thematic analysis was also used to determine relevant themes. Since CE is an ill-defined term, all instances of text related to 'community' or its similes such as 'stakeholders' were coded, themed and then discussed in relation to the research question.

4.4 Ethical Considerations & Limitations

As this study involves human subjects there are a number of important ethical considerations. Approval by the Victoria University of Wellington School of Information Management Human Ethics Committee was granted before data was collected. A participant information sheet was provided to participants (see appendix 9.1) and informed consent was granted through a signed consent form (see appendix 9.2) that accurately outlines the nature of the study, what participation in semi-structured interviews would entail, any potential risks and benefits, a guarantee that all responses will remain confidential and that participants can withdraw at any stage up until data analysis. Confidentiality is upheld by using codes to represent participants once data was gathered. Respondent validation ensured that participants trust that they are represented fairly and accurately (see appendix 9.5) and in the cases where participants identified as Māori, they were given the opportunity to consider and put forward alternative Māori terms or concepts to represent their ideas, although this opportunity was not taken up. As this study involves one organisation, informed consent was granted by a senior manager on behalf of the organisation. The identity of the organisation has been kept confidential in line with the wishes of the senior management team. A notable conflict of interest is present where the researcher works as a Team Leader for the organisation and some of the participants are known to the researcher. Care was taken so that all participants were able to give their consent freely without coercion and that all analysis of data occurred without corruption of prior knowledge. It must be acknowledged that despite the utmost care in this regard a bias does exist during data collection and analysis and will act as a key limitation to the study. A further limitation exists through the self-selection of interviewees who responded to a generic email. Just under half of the Team Leaders in the organisation responded along with two

Associate Team Leaders. Because the background, experience and the community served by each individual Team Leader was not considered when selecting participants and the potential that those who responded had a pre-existing interest in the topic, the results can't be said to be generalizable.

5.0 Results

From the documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews, it was clear the library organisation doesn't possess a concise definition or strategy around CE. As indicated in the literature, it predictably meant the perceptions within the organisation isn't consistent. Despite that there were still a number of themes that emerged, which help describe how effective community engagement is perceived along with key themes influencing that perception. In this section, the prevalence of the term CE in internal documents is discussed before outlining the dominant themes found in the data gathered through both documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews.

5.1 Documentary Analysis

Drawing on symbolic interactionism, it was important to understand how Team Leaders are constructing their meanings of community engagement within the wider organisation rhetoric. CE is referred to frequently in a variety of contexts within the documents analysed. It appears in position descriptions for library assistants and information librarians or equivalent professional positions as a key area of accountability under the heading of, Customer: "Creatively engage with the community". It also appears in the organisation's Leadership Charter, which is included in all library leadership position descriptions, "Being customer driven and community orientated: Understands and engages with the community (as appropriate)." The term also occurs in the library's bicultural plan alongside the Māori term, Whakawhanaungatanga to describe the overall intention of the plan. In these documents, there is no further clarification for what that term means or the practical application. *The Public Libraries of New Zealand: A Strategic Framework: 2012-2017* (The Association of Public Libraries Managers Inc., 2012) has been referenced by the organisation in place of their own strategic plan. The term CE in this document is referenced as a key competency for modern librarians within the context of connecting people with relevant library resources and with others with similar enquiries (2012, p. 37). This frames CE within a context of facilitating connections between citizens and with content relevant to need or interest. The term is also used as a heading for brief case studies of NZ libraries undertaking a broad range of activities characterised as CE and

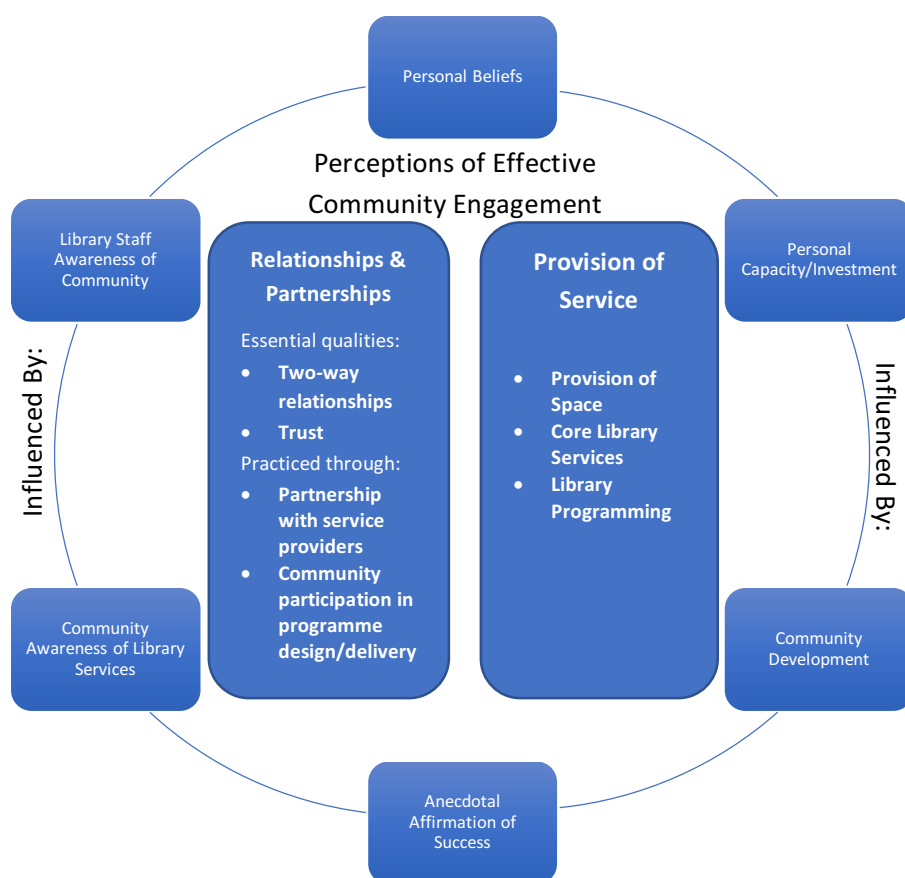
Lifelong Learning (2012, p. 36). These activities involve working with individuals or groups to plan and deliver programmes, celebrating events of significance to the wider community or once again facilitating opportunities for citizens to connect with one another.

Other than the explicit use of the term, CE, two common themes did emerge from the documentary analysis which align with the dominant themes from the interview data to inform the overall perception of effective CE: Relationships and Partnerships and Awareness of Community Need. These will be discussed along with the interview data below.

5.2 Key Themes in the Perception of Effective Community Engagement

Two key themes emerged from the data analysis which characterise how effective CE is perceived by Team Leaders in the Library organisation: Relationships and Partnerships and the Provision of Service. Six other themes also emerged which have a direct influence on maintaining that perception: personal beliefs, personal capacity/investment, community development, anecdotal affirmation of success, community awareness of library services and library staff awareness of community. These themes are visually presented in a thematic map (Figure 1) showing the two dominant themes surrounded by the themes that interact with and influence the Team Leaders perceptions.

Figure 1: Thematic Map of Team Leaders Perceptions of Effective CE



5.2.1 Relationships and Partnerships

Relationships and Partnerships was one of the two dominant themes that emerged from all data analysed. The two terms, 'relationship' and 'partnership' were often used interchangeably in a range of contexts, however, partnership was almost always used when describing working with another service provider or importantly when working with Māori in alignment with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. Partnership in this context is bound by legislation through the Local Government Act 2002 (2002, sec. 4) and is of unique significance for New Zealand Libraries when considering CE. Throughout position descriptions at all levels of the organisation, developing partnerships is a key area of accountability, with Team Leaders in particular charged with proactively looking for opportunities and building partnerships. Where the term is expanded upon, partnership involves facilitating participation in the planning, design or delivery of services; creating methods of promoting or enhancing services or resources; and insuring the library is aware of what is happening in the community. Partnership in this context related most strongly to creating strategic means to enhance the profile and use of library services. All interview participants described effective

community engagement as work that involved building relationships and working in partnership with either community groups or other community service providers. From the interview data, the theme of Relationships and Partnerships was distilled down to two categories: the intrinsic nature to the relationships that made them effective and the practical embodiment of CE occurring through a relationship or partnership. The intrinsic nature of a successful relationship was perceived by Team Leaders as being two-way, where both parties had a shared investment and trust was both an essential enabler to this relationship and a desired outcome. This was plainly expressed by one of the Team Leaders:

TL5: Once you start working together the ideal is that you both have the exact same input, not you saying what goes but you both working together so it can go itself.

A reciprocal relationship also meant that it extended beyond a transaction, where the relationship often involved a level of personal connection between library staff and the community:

TL4: I think so because everybody knows everybody. You know, you walk down the street at lunch time and I don't think I ever see someone that I don't stop and have a chat with. There is always some sort of conversation that takes place and it might be about something that is happening in the community that we have got a small involvement in or it might just be something that is happening in the community.

With these qualities present, the practical application of a relationship or partnership was expressed as being either through working with another service provider to deliver a new service in the library or out in the community; or drawing on a section of the community to plan, design or deliver a service or programme. Service providers were perceived as being a comparable part of the community to citizens or community groups and ranged from being charitable community development organisations to schools and other agencies. The involvement of the community in programme or service design and delivery generally meant that it was something initiated by the library that then drew on expertise in the community to help design then run the activity. This was perceived as a significant CE undertaking where an increased sense of community buy-in to the service was felt and the library was thought by Team Leaders to become more credible within the community through association with trusted groups and proven expertise. Two Team Leaders did comment that an ideal form of CE would mean the community would also initiate the idea:

TL7: Ok the term community engagement means to me that the community initiate, actively participate and are in charge of creating opportunities within the library space. Community engagement to me is not library saying - we're doing this, come along. Community engagement is the community is doing this in the library space.

In general, it was felt by many that the community's poor awareness of library services was a significant barrier to this occurring with any regularity:

TL3: We can't sit and wait for people to come to us. We have to be proactive. It's that whole, if we're going to remain relevant then we have to be proactive and so I think we can instigate community engagement in examples like that and then step back and it becomes self-running.

Overall, the Team Leaders were consistent in their perception that effective CE involved some ability for the community, either in the form of a service provider, citizen or community group, to inform and influence the opportunities provided to people through library services and programmes.

5.2.2 Provision of Service

The provision of library service was an equally dominant theme for Team Leaders in their perception of quality CE. The provision of service relates to use by the public of library spaces; the use of core library activities such as book lending and public computers; and the provision of library initiated and run programmes. All but two of the Team Leaders made no distinction between this as a CE activity and the former examples of relationships and partnerships, with only one Team Leader completely discounting the provision of service as CE. This became particularly evident as Team Leaders considered what proportion of their library's activities they would characterise as CE and when they considered practical examples to support their ideas about what CE meant. Engagement in this context became a somewhat murky term that was synonymous with use or consumption rather than participation as in the comments reflecting relationships and partnerships. In this regard, the concept of CE becomes inextricably tied to the role of public libraries generally:

TL7: As far as I'm concerned, our daily mahi is all community engagement.

TL3: See I really struggle to answer that because I see that everyone that

walks through the door I see as someone engaged with the library for some reason or another...

The provision of space was perceived as an important part of effective CE. This was described in terms of the library being a community hub or meeting place where people could connect and interact freely with one another either in designated community rooms or simply within the library itself. In all cases this generally equated to a form of passive engagement on behalf of the library:

TL6: We host a home school group on a weekly basis and they make really good use of the facility and they love using us and the tutors are happy and the kids are happy and the parents are happy and I guess that's part of community engagement because we're providing a place for those children to meet, they're using some of our resources but we just make sure they feel welcome and included and all the rest of it.

Somewhat contradictorily, library designed and delivered programming was also readily identified by many Team Leaders as a practical embodiment of CE, despite a clear belief in the importance of two-way relationships where the community has a shared investment in the design or delivery of a service as previously stated:

TL4: I mean we've got it happening weekly with our preschool programming. I consider that as part of our community engagement very strongly.

The dominant reason for aligning library programming to CE was due to the perceived outcome of relationship building that occurs; both between members of the public and between the public and the library. As mentioned earlier, having strong two-way relationships was seen as an integral element to effective CE, however in this case, the methods used in building those relationships – the library initiated programmes – were indistinct from the participatory act of CE.

5.2.3 Personal Beliefs

Personal Beliefs describes the experiences that Team Leaders draw on when they consider effective CE and their own reaction to the concept. With the absence of any substantial formal direction from the organisation around how CE is to be understood and implemented, Team Leaders predominantly drew on their own personal and professional experiences to inform their perception. Non-work

related experiences such as involvement in community groups or being on the receiving end of poor CE by an institution were acknowledged by several Team Leaders while three attributed formal library education, professional networks or professional experience as key factors influencing their perception. The personal response to language associated with CE was also significant. Several Team Leaders attributed negative connotations to the term, classing it as, “management speak”, indicative of a “tick-box” exercise or as agency derived rather than community-led:

TL8: Nah we hate it because when you say it like that it sounds like something you do to people.

TL7: So, as a team, we talk - ok how do we engage our community and when I say that the team will laugh - oh that's management speak! Because that's what we do every day.

None of the Team Leaders used the term, CE explicitly in their teams; rather it was inferred, implicitly understood or alternative terms were used, such as partnerships and relationships or the Māori terms of Manaakitanga, Whakawhanaungatanga and Tino Rangatiratanga, which relate to the idea of caring for or hosting others, building relationships and self-determination. Despite that there was a unanimous perception that CE was an integral part of the functioning of public libraries.

5.2.4 Personal Capacity/Investment

Closely related to personal beliefs was the theme of personal capacity/investment. This theme related to the way in which CE was undertaken, relying largely upon the personal capacity of individual staff members. Once again, without the formal strategic plans to inform how CE is undertaken it was inconsistently applied across the organization and highly subject to the capacity and investment of the individuals driving the CE initiative. This was expressed predominantly through the way that informal analysis was used to assess community need and the way in which personal connections and community knowledge held by individual staff members informed the type of CE work undertaken. The result of this meant that the method in which work was done and the types of activities focused on varied significantly across the organization. This could indicate the relative precariousness of CE, however, many of the Team Leaders alluded to the fact that their team members had an innate drive to undertake this work indicating it was a significant attraction to the role:

TL3: I think a lot of our library staff are really passionate about what they do

and they're wanting to connect with the community that they serve... this team have a really strong sense of community.

The main organisational strategic influence on CE was through strategic recruitment, mentioned by four of the Team Leaders. People with specific skills, community connections or cultural and social competency were recruited specifically to enable CE.

5.2.5 Community Development

The theme, community development, encapsulates ideas relating to citizenship, community building and Tino Rangatiratanga or community self-determination and was expressed by all but one of the Team Leaders. It was a significant motivational factor underpinning CE for Team Leaders that was also well supported by rhetoric found in strategic documents such as the *Public Libraries of New Zealand: A Strategic Framework 2012-2017* (The Association of Public Libraries Managers Inc., 2012) and the organisation's strategic planning documents. In particular, it was discussed by Team Leaders in relation to the way they understand CE and the purpose it serves:

TL8: Yeah, it's self-determination. The ability to be self-determining about making your own choices. Your own choices for your whanau or your club. Like maybe when you don't have all the skills - how would that other group then work with you to help you get to where you want to be not to where they thought you should get to.

Supporting community development by attending to social issues was also used as a way to determine value in a CE initiative:

TL6: You know, social isolation is one of the issues that this organization is trying to make some progress with and we see a lot of our people come in and all they're doing is interacting with the computer and very little other interactions so I saw the opportunity for us to help in that way as well.

Activities or ideas related to community development were discussed freely in relation to the purpose of public libraries, often indistinguishable from comments specific to CE. It appeared that this motivation that lay behind CE efforts was the same that drove the Team Leaders' commitment to their profession and sense of job satisfaction. It was once the ideas relating to community development were expanded upon by Team Leaders that a connection between library services, community development and CE was made. The logic can be summarised as: CE encourages

community development; library services also encourage community development; library services are synonymous with CE.

TL3: But I suppose if you break it down into your library and well what is it you actually do then it's everything we do is community engagement, it's just some of it requires more of our input than others.

In this sense, the outcomes of effective CE were perceived as the most important factor, rather than the process involved in achieving these outcomes. Similar to the CE outcome of relationship development as mentioned earlier, the result of this perception means the delineation between a library-led service and a participatory CE process is irrelevant as long as they both lead to community development.

5.2.6 Anecdotal Affirmation of Success

In order to determine a Team Leaders' perception of effective CE they were asked how they evaluate a CE initiative or determine value. Although quantitative tools such as attendance were used to formally report on initiatives, Team Leaders overwhelmingly indicated that anecdotal measures such as personal observations or informal feedback were the most personally meaningful factors in determining success. These anecdotal measures were occasionally shared internally within the organisation in the form of stories however most significantly they were used to reinforce a Team Leader's perception and inform future initiatives. A sense of staff engagement was also significant and when Team Leaders could observe their team members being enthusiastic about their contributions to the community it added to their perceived value of the initiative:

TL6: The only thing I'd add is whether the staff involved are getting a good vibe off it. If they're feeling like they've contributed to the community - that's a real bonus to me.

Team Leaders all felt that the organisation or profession didn't possess evaluative tools that could effectively convey the outcomes or impact of CE. The result of this is that evaluation generally relied upon subjective measures which spoke directly to an individual Team Leader's personal experience, capacity and ideas relating to CE. One Team Leader acknowledged this and put forward a way of validating CE efforts through a quantitative sampling exercise:

TL6: Instead of an enquiry sampling week, if we did a community engagement week - you know, how many people have used your building in

the last month? Or what are some different ways that you've actually connected with some community groups - that sort of thing I think would be a really useful thing to capture because through capturing it you're giving it a bit more validity. All of us are probably doing it and we know why we're doing it but I think it would be really useful I think to tease that out a bit more.

Other than justifying an idea for CE, no Team Leaders felt they experienced any pressure to report any evaluative data other than participation.

5.2.7 Community Awareness of Library Services & Library Staff Awareness of Community

Being aware of the community and in turn having a community aware of what services were available to them were essential factors that enabled effective CE for all Team Leaders. In most cases Team Leaders cited a lack of awareness of library services in the community as a key barrier to effective CE and this would inform outreach services and justify library-led initiatives:

TL8: Because that's the biggest thing people are not really getting what library is still so not seeing how it applies to them regardless of whichever situation they're in I suppose. So, what is that – is it a sense of connection or belonging or relevance maybe?

Three Team Leaders differentiated between outreach/promotion and CE, seeing it more as part of the process enabling CE, whereas four of the Team Leaders perceived it as just another example of CE. All Team Leaders invested time and energy in their teams to enhance awareness of their communities. This took the form of using statistical analysis, outreach and informal analysis based on perceived need and the lived or worked experience of staff. This activity was well informed by strategic documents and position descriptions which routinely cited the needs of the community:

Deliver a range of programmes, services and events within agreed guidelines to reflect community needs

Libraries' planning is responsive to current and future community needs including partnership opportunities

Again, the process for determining community needs wasn't consistent across the organisation and was highly reliant on the personal capacity of Team Leaders and their teams.

6.0 Discussion

The principal research objective of this study was to determine how Team Leaders in a New Zealand public library perceive effective community engagement. Drawing on symbolic interactionism, the overall perception was informed by not only the way Team Leaders personally define CE but the complex interaction between the way they communicate their ideas, practically apply, then evaluate them within the organisation. Team Leaders were unanimous in their conviction that CE was a relevant concept to public libraries and their motivation centring on community development was consistent with international literature (Ingraham, 2015; Mehra & Srinivasan, 2007; Willingham, 2008). However, as predicted, without an established CE framework to inform efforts the perception of effective CE by Team Leaders was problematic, particularly in regard to the way the term was practically applied. The two dominant themes that emerged – Relationships and Partnerships and the Provision of Service have implications to the way the library intersects with the public sphere. These implications are discussed before considering the way the remaining themes might be influenced within the organisation if CE was to be developed.

Relationships and Partnerships as key qualities of CE is well established in the literature (Goulding, 2009, p. 39; Ramachandra & Mansor, 2014, p. 590; United Nations & Government of the State of Queensland, 2005; Working Together Project, 2008, p. 16). Although this was expressed as a key theme by Team Leaders there was little acknowledgement that a continuum of participation might denote a higher value on CE initiatives where the community have greater levels of input into the design, delivery and evaluation. Some excellent examples of community participation were provided, however, these were presented as equal to other initiatives where the community were, “passive beneficiaries and recipients” (Sung & Hepworth, 2013, p. 41) rather than active partners. The effect of this is that without a particular level of desired community participation in CE initiatives, there is little motivation in the organisation to pursue greater community involvement. Where this does occur, it appears to be highly subject to the personal motivation of a Team Leader or staff member. Service providers were consistently regarded as key community partners and the collaborative activities perceived as good examples of CE. Although working with other service providers is widely understood in the literature to be an important method used to connect with a community the goals and objectives of a service provider can’t be substituted for the direct involvement of community members themselves (Pateman & Williment, 2013, p. 26). The Team Leaders’ perception is not consistent with Pateman & Williment (2013) and the implication is that if the community can be substituted for a community service provider then the interaction doesn’t

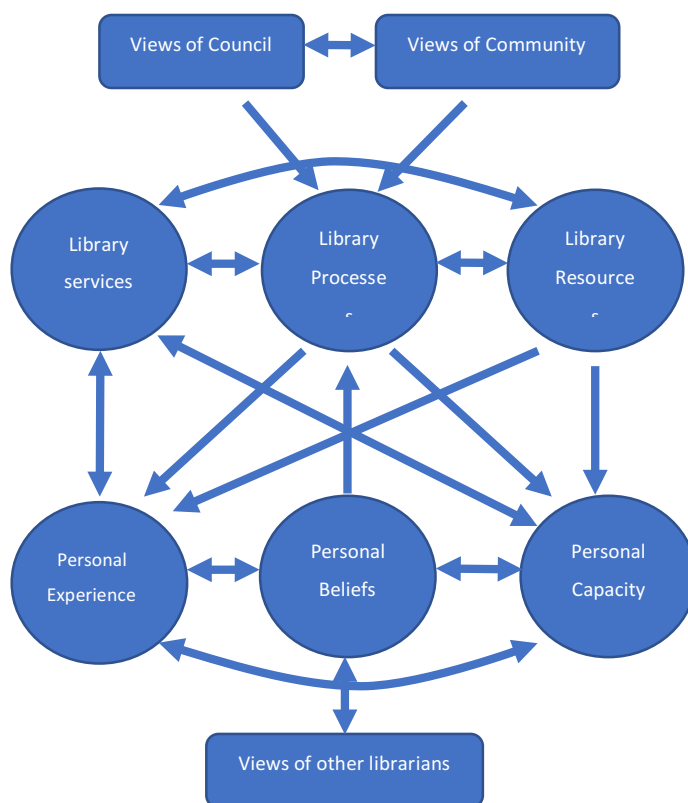
enhance the opportunity for community input or participation in service design or delivery. The essential elements of CE presented by Sung et al (2013) had a stronger resonance with Team Leaders' perception than the continuum models. In particular, the Team Leaders' themes of two-way relationships and trust embodied the elements of commitment, genuineness and relevance (2013, p. 211). The fact that these themes were so dominant and that they align well to the Sung et al (2013) findings indicates that Team Leaders have a consistent conceptual awareness of the factors that enable effective CE to happen. Considering that many library organisations who have had CE frameworks still struggled to engender a consistent conceptual understanding of the term, this indicates that if a strategic approach to CE was undertaken, these Team Leaders and the organisation would be well placed to ensure these essential elements were present.

Despite a clear theme emerging around Relationships and Partnerships, all but one of the Team Leaders described the provision of library services as synonymous with CE. This presents the most notable inconsistency between the Team Leaders conceptual understandings of CE and the practical application. The influence on this appears to come from an emphasis on outcomes rather than process when determining what constitutes CE. Team Leaders were predominantly motivated by community development and along with relationship building saw these as key outcomes of CE; outcomes that were also understood to be achieved from a myriad of other library services. It appeared to be difficult for the Team Leaders to separate out these two activities while acknowledging they shared similar outcomes. This phenomenon is common in libraries undertaking CE, even when an established framework exists, with the challenge of transforming common-place interactions into opportunities for meaningful CE (Goulding, 2009, p. 42). The fact that many Team Leaders distanced themselves from the term, CE, was a telling sign of their discomfort differentiating between their library service provision and specific initiatives that sought greater levels of community participation. For one Team Leader, there was a negative connotation with the term caused by personal experience, but for the other's their wariness of the term was due to a lack of shared understanding, a finding highly consistent with other studies (Goulding, 2009; Renaisi Ltd, 2011; Sen, 2014; Sung & Hepworth, 2013). The term was impractical to use because it wasn't clear precisely what it involved. Much of the work Team Leaders described would be situated early in a CE continuum, which has more to do with creating awareness, building relationships and setting the tone for increased participation. This is an essential process to achieve CE, however, because it isn't differentiated from CE then there is no incentive to move forward in a continuum, giving up more control to the community to create opportunities that meet their own needs or aspirations. Where

this does happen in the organisation it once again appears to be either circumstantial or dependent upon the individual Team Leader or staff member involved.

Overall, the implications of the Team Leaders' perceptions relate specifically to the public sphere and the binary concept of citizenship. When CE is described in terms of the provision and consumption of library services then the only way the community can influence the library and engage in Biesta's "transformative act" (2014) is by exercising consumer choice; engaging with the library by being a citizen-consumer. Budd (1997) describes how two things occur in this type of model: community members who are using the library services are privileged over non-users and the interaction under the auspices of CE becomes primarily a source of material gain for the library (1997, p. 312). Although generally Team Leaders described examples of genuine partnership with the community and conceptually presented ideas relating to community participation, by coupling this with the provision of library service means the overall perception of CE becomes ambiguous. For Team Leaders, participation can be substituted with consumption; just as equally supporting the public-citizen model as it does the citizen-consumer without privileging one over the other. It is therefore difficult to make the case that the library organisation as a whole values and strategically supports public-citizenship through their approach to CE. The cause of this appears to be mostly down to the lack of an agreed definition and organisational strategy which would unite the efforts, knowledge and experience of individuals. It is telling that all Team Leaders expressed a strong attachment to the idea of CE and despite there being such ambiguity around the practical application, they persevere regardless, drawing on their own personal resources to see it carried out and valued. The fact that all Team Leaders predominantly relied upon their own anecdotal evidence to attribute value to CE was further proof that the organisation lacks the means to sufficiently validate the CE work undertaken. Again, this would be an area of development for the organisation if they were to achieve a consistent approach around CE and focus on specifically supporting the public-citizen model of citizenship.

Figure 2: Actions and Interactions Within the Organisation



A sub-problem to the principal research question was determining the conditions or interactions that influence a Team Leader’s perception of effective CE. The themes, Personal Capacity/Investment, Anecdotal Affirmation of Success and Library Staff Awareness of Community have a strong connection to the library’s processes which determine how services are delivered. In particular, the organisation’s professional development process would have an influence on the personal capacity of staff to undertake CE; evaluation processes would determine how CE is formally validated and service planning processes would influence how community needs and viewpoints inform library decision making. The theme, Community Awareness of Library Services would be influenced by the provision of outreach and promotion services. These interactions could be visually represented such as in *Figure 2*, which shows the many factors involved in the provision of a library service and the way practices and perceptions are continually influenced within the organisation. The key implication of these themes is that if the organisation wanted to influence the overall perception of CE and undertake a cohesive strategic approach, then focussing on the library process and services mentioned above would have an influence on the perceptions of CE of Team Leaders and within the organisation.

7.0 Conclusion

Using a qualitative research design this study sought to understand how Team Leaders in a New Zealand public library perceive effective CE. Eight Team Leaders from a large NZ public library organisation were interviewed and the organisation's relevant strategic documents were analysed. The results of the data collection were then organised into themes to help understand how effective CE is perceived, the interactions that influence this perception and the implications that this perception has on the relationship the library has with its public.

Despite widespread use of the term in strategic documents the organisation doesn't possess a cohesive strategic approach to CE. Predictably this meant that the perceptions of CE by Team Leaders were problematic, demonstrating that similar to the international experience, the New Zealand library organisation has difficulty in practically applying the concept when there is no shared vision. Despite that, Team Leaders were unanimous in their conviction that CE was an important concept for public libraries and this was largely motivated by the perception of the importance of community development as an outcome. In the absence of a shared vision, the personal capacity of individual staff members and the personal beliefs of Team Leaders in particular had a significant influence on how CE is enacted and evaluated. At the heart of the Team Leaders' perceptions was the importance of two-way relationships and a sense of trust; qualities that align with findings on the essential elements of effective CE (Sung et al., 2013, p. 211).

The two themes that conveyed Team Leaders' perception of effective CE were Relationships and Partnerships and the Provision of Services. The theme Relationships and Partnerships conveyed an understanding of the importance of community participation in CE and the value in facilitating an interaction that isn't based on a transaction. However, this was confused by the perception that service providers are substitutes for the community and by the idea that participation also includes the consumption of library services. The implication of this is that a high proportion of the library's CE responds to the citizen-consumer model of citizenship with no enhanced value placed upon initiatives that support the public citizen model. A shared understanding of CE and how it is differentiated from the provision of library services would be an important way forward if the library wanted a cohesive strategy for undertaking CE in the future.

Symbolic Interactionism was used to guide both data collection and analysis, which assisted in understanding the complex interactions that make up a Team Leader's perceptions and

consequently the key themes that most readily influenced these perceptions. When the actions and interactions within the organisation were considered these themes were then related to the library processes of professional development, evaluation and service planning as well as the library services of outreach and promotion. Drawing the connection between the themes and library processes allows the organisation to understand how perceptions can be influenced if a strategic approach to CE was undertaken.

Although this is the study of a single case, the findings support the view that the consistent practical application of CE is highly dependent upon a cohesive shared vision. The study also draws the connection between the public sphere and citizenship with CE, which is useful in determining the overall impact and principal benefactors of CE. By framing the conversation on CE in these terms, library authorities are able to consider the wider societal implications to the way services are planned and delivered.

With New Zealand's unique bicultural environment and the guiding principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, beneficial future research would include how Māori perceive effective participation and partnership with institutions such as libraries. The vast majority of research on CE still takes into account the practices and perceptions of library practitioners rather than the community itself. Before a New Zealand model of CE could be developed more research should be done on how the community perceive effective CE.

This study further demonstrates how widespread the term CE is within the library profession and yet still how inconsistently it is understood. Despite library authorities in the UK and Canada adopting CE strategies and a number of studies highlighting the difficulties of practically applying the concept, CE has reached the New Zealand library profession and is still hampered by a lack of understanding and inconsistencies in its application and evaluation. An intuitive conceptual understanding of effective CE does appear to be present in Team Leaders which indicates this NZ public library is in a position to embrace a shared strategic vision for effective CE.

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9.0 Appendices

9.1 Participant Information Sheet



SCHOOL OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
TE KURA TIAKI, WHAKAWHITI KŌRERO
LEVEL 5, RUTHERFORD HOUSE, PIPITEA CAMPUS, 23 LAMBTON QUAY, WELLINGTON
PO Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand
Phone +64-4-463 5103 Fax +64-4-463 5446 Email sim@vuw.ac.nz Website www.victoria.ac.nz/sim

Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title:

The Perception of Effective Community Engagement: A Case Study in a New Zealand Public Library

Researcher:

Sam Ludemann, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

As part of the completion of my Masters of Information Studies, this study is designed to examine how the concept of effective community engagement (CE) is perceived and enacted within a large New Zealand (NZ) public library organisation and how this informs the nature of the relationship the library has with its public. The findings of this study will be relevant to contributing to the development of a consistent CE framework for NZ Libraries. Victoria University requires, and has granted, approval from the School's Human Ethics Committee.

I am inviting Team Leaders from [REDACTED] to participate in this research. Participants will be asked to take part in an approximate 1 hour interview. Permission will be asked to record the interview, and a transcript of the interview will be sent to participants for checking.

Participation is voluntary, and you will not be identified personally in any written report produced as a result of this research. including possible publication in academic conferences and journals. The identity of the organisation will also be kept confidential and not identified in any written report or presentation. All material collected will be kept confidential, and will be viewed only by myself and my supervisor, Professor Anne Goulding, Director of Research Degrees Programme Victoria University of Wellington. The research report will be submitted for marking to the School of Information Management, and subsequently deposited in the University Library. Should any participant wish to withdraw from the project, they may do so until August 1st and the data collected up to that point will be destroyed. All data collected from participants will be destroyed within 2 years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at ludemasam@myvuw.ac.nz or telephone 027 602 6885, or you may contact my supervisor Professor Anne Goulding at anne.goulding@vuw.ac.nz, telephone 04-463 5887 or the School of Information Management Human Ethics Committee Chair, Dr Philip Calvert, philip.calvert@vuw.ac.nz, telephone 04-463 6629

Sam Ludemann

9.2 Participant Consent Form



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TE KURA TIAKI, WHAKAWHITI KŌRERO
LEVEL 5, RUTHERFORD HOUSE, PIPITEA CAMPUS, 23 LAMBTON QUAY, WELLINGTON
PO Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand
Phone +64-4-463 5103 Fax +64-4-463 5446 Email sim@vuw.ac.nz Website www.victoria.ac.nz/sim

Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title:

The Perception of Effective Community Engagement: A Case Study in a New Zealand Public Library

Researcher:

Sam Ludemann, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this project, without having to give reasons, by e-mailing ludemasam@myvuw.ac.nz by the 1st of August 2017.

I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and their supervisor, the published results will not use my name, and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me. The identity of the organisation will also be kept confidential in any published results or presentations.

I understand that the data I provide will not be used for any other purpose or released to others.

I understand that, if this interview is audio recorded, the recording and transcripts of the interviews will be erased within 2 years after the conclusion of the project. Furthermore, I will have an opportunity to check the transcripts of the interview.

Please indicate (by ticking the boxes below) which of the following apply:

- I would like to receive a summary of the results of this research when it is completed.
- I agree to this interview being audio recorded.

Signed:

Name of participant:

Date:

9.3 Interview Questions



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 TE KURA TIAKI, WHAKAWHITI KÖRERO
 LEVEL 5, RUTHERFORD HOUSE, PIPITEA CAMPUS, 23 LAMBTON QUAY, WELLINGTON
 PO Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand
 Phone +64-4-463 5103 Fax +64-4-463 5446 Email sim@vuw.ac.nz Website www.victoria.ac.nz/sim

Interview Questions for Participants

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for my study. I am interested in your own experience and perception of community engagement (CE) in public libraries.

The interview will be semi-structured, meaning I have some key topics and some associated questions to guide the interview but I'll also have questions that arise directly from your answers as well.

Below are the key topics along with associated questions. I'm interested in how the concept is perceived or understood, how it is used in planning and how CE initiatives are evaluated. Once again, the questions may vary slightly depending on your responses.

<p>Perception of CE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please tell me what the term community engagement means to you <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What informed this perception for you? ○ How does CE relate to the role of public libraries for you? (what purpose does it fill in the operation of public libraries?) • In what context is the concept of CE referred to or discussed in your team and in the organisation? • Can you tell me what a quality community engagement initiative from a public library would ideally look like to you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you have an example from within the library network of quality community engagement (what was happening, how was it initiated, who was involved and what were the outcomes?) ○ If so, what made this an example of quality CE? • What proportion of your library's activities would be characterised as CE? Please outline the CE activities your library or team is involved in.
<p>Planning and Prioritizing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the concept of CE used or referred to in strategic planning in your team? • How are CE initiatives planned? What processes are involved? • Who initiates an opportunity or an idea for CE? • How is it determined what CE initiatives are to be undertaken in your team?
<p>Evaluating CE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is success determined for CE initiatives in your team/organisation? • How would you personally define success for a CE initiative? • In what ways do you practically measure or evaluate CE initiatives? • What CE do you feel is rewarded or valued by the organisation/council? How is this acknowledged?

9.4 Coding Sample with key themes

Quote	Initial Codes	Level 1 Themes	Level 2 Themes
TL1: Yes, I think that was particularly effective because they were members of the community we were trying to attract so that worked well... they had the expertise. They could run it really well - they were trusted.	Drawing on community expertise	Trust	Relationships and Partnerships
TL6: Community engagement I think means having sort of meaningful relationships with the communities that either use the library or potential users of the library. It's very much a two-way thing. I see it as us reaching out to those communities and being proactive but also being receptive to what they are asking of us so that we are working more in a partnership way with them	Two-way relationships	Two-way Relationship	
TL1: What was successful about that was involving... Getting the community to do the actual programme. It saved us an awful lot of time and trouble because they were much more knowledgeable but they also did all the promoting of it	Drawing on community expertise	Community participation in programme delivery	
TL7: So, a community organisation - which is my aim for ██████, for a community organisation to recognise that the library is a really good place to base yourself. To reach out to the community.	Provision of space for community service providers	Partnership with other service providers	
TL3: everyone that walks through the door I see as someone engaged with the library for some reason or another and whether that's to come and sit on a public computer and look at Facebook or it's to come and attend a winter warmer session	Library use as engagement	CE as core business	Provision of service
TL7: Every transaction is a community engagement to encourage people to come back into the library. So, it's fundamental in how we breath at ██████... as far as I'm concerned, our daily mahi is all community engagement.	CE as daily mahi	Provision of Space	
TL4: I mean we've got it happening weekly with our preschool programming. I consider that as part of our community engagement very strongly.	Preschool programming as CE	Library programming	
TL6: And I suppose just general reflections on what is the nature of community through my non-work life if you like. Through church, through the local resident's association which I'm involved with, through the civil defence work that I did post-earthquake	Experience of community through non-work life	Personal experience	Personal Belief
TL7: So, as a team, we talk - ok how do we engage our community and when I say that the team will laugh - oh that's management speak! Because that's what we do every day.	Management speak Problematic association with CE term	Language	

<p>TL3: I also will kind of look at the faces of the people there at the time and you can tell an event that's got buy-in, that's successful. Its then that decision of was it worth it? You know, you might have had an event that five people attended and they might have had a fantastic time and they might have been five people that get together and there is a spark and who knows that might be the start of something</p>	<p>Evaluation based on observed impact on participants</p>	<p>Anecdotal Affirmation of Success</p>	<p>Anecdotal Affirmation of Success</p>
<p>TL6: You know, social isolation is one of the issues that this organization is trying to make some progress with and we see a lot of our people come in and all they're doing is interacting with the computer and very little other interactions so I saw the opportunity for us to help in that way as well.</p>	<p>Under-served and disengaged Social isolation</p>	<p>Community building</p>	<p>Community development</p>
<p>TL7: in my dream, a real cohesive joining of adults in the community actually being part of the whole whanau of the library so that they have the ability to alter behaviours or offer activities or create opportunities for themselves and their families in the library space. It's not all library staff responsibility. That's my ultimate dream</p>	<p>Community using library to create opportunities for themselves</p>	<p>Supporting self-determination/ Tino Rangatiratanga</p>	
<p>TL3: I think a lot of our library staff are really passionate about what they do and they're wanting to connect with the community that they serve and they have a strong sense...and this team have a really strong sense of community</p>	<p>Staff personal conviction</p>	<p>Personal community connections or knowledge</p>	<p>Personal Capacity/Investment</p>
<p>TL3: So, it's working out how do we share the information around what we might have to offer that's of value to let people know what's available. Because that's the biggest thing people are not really getting what library is still so not seeing how it applies to them regardless of whichever situation they're in I suppose. So, what is that - is it a sense of connection or belonging or relevance maybe?</p>	<p>Demonstrating value</p>	<p>Library awareness as groundwork for CE</p>	<p>Community Awareness of Library Service</p>
<p>TL1: I think we are maybe a little bit inclined to give people what we think they ought to have rather than what they want. So, I think the more steps we take towards finding out what they want and engaging with them is better.</p>	<p>Finding out what people want</p>	<p>Understanding community need</p>	<p>Library Staff Awareness of Community</p>

9.5 Respondent Validation Sample Coding Sheet



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 LEVEL 5, RUTHERFORD HOUSE, PIPITEA CAMPUS, 23 LAMBTON QUAY, WELLINGTON
 PO Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand
 Phone +64-4-463 5103 Fax +64-4-463 5446 Email sim@vuw.ac.nz Website www.victoria.ac.nz/sim

TL6 Coding Sample

Quote	Codes	Level 1	Level 2
And I suppose just general reflections on what is the nature of community through my non-work life if you like. Through church, through the local resident's association which I'm involved with, through the civil defence work that I did post-earthquake	Experience of community through non-work life	Personal Experience	Personal Belief
Probably not the term community engagement. Probably more the terms that I've used around partnership or relationship.	CE synonymous with partnership or relationship	Language	
You know, social isolation is one of the issues that this organization is trying to make some progress with and we see a lot of our people come in and all they're doing is interacting with the computer and very little other interactions so I saw the opportunity for us to help in that way as well.	Under-served and disengaged Social isolation	Community building	Motivated by community development
I don't know if you'd necessarily you'd call it library skills or what you'd call it but just boosting peoples... boosting being in whatever way. So, if it's some skills around the iPad which means they're able to communicate with their grandchildren on the other side of the world, that's actually enhancing that person's life if you like. Capacity building - that's a good way to put it	Individual's capacity building Enhancing people's life	Individual's capacity building	
I guess it's probably in terms of comments passed by the participants and also the general vibe that gets reported back to me from the staff members who were involved. If they were reporting it was a real buzz or they were reporting that they were seeing people they wouldn't normally see or that people were making really positive comments about what was happening I would sort of use that.	Evaluation based on observed impact Positive vibe	Anecdotal affirmation of success	Anecdotal affirmation of success
Community engagement I think means having sort of meaningful relationships with the communities that either use the library or potential users of the library. It's very much a two-way thing. I see it as us reaching out to those communities and being proactive but also being receptive to what they are asking of us so that we are working more in a partnership way with them	Two-way relationships	Two-way relationships	Relationships & Partnerships

Student ID Number: 300326456

Name: Sam Ludemann

Word Count: 11,400