Making Sense, Making Meaning, Making a Difference

Keynote address for the National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Symposium.

Getting Results: Making a difference for New Zealanders

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Acknowledgements

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tātou katoa.

I begin by acknowledging the Indigenous people who walked and worked upon this land and told their tales – for generations before our arrival.

I express my respect to their Elders, past and present.

I wish to acknowledge my own parents and family, and those that came before them.

I also acknowledge my colleagues and co-researchers over several projects.

I’d also like to acknowledge the many adult learners I’ve worked with over the years, in a wide range of contexts, from whom I’ve learned so much about literacy and adult learning.

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To the people responsible for our catering

To our IT support people

Kia ora, tena koe, tena koe to all of the people who have helped to make this event so successful!

An apology – or forewarning

Since I arrived here in January of this year I’ve been asked to speak at several adult literacy and numeracy events. There is a lot to say on these issues and I have tried to craft my presentations for each particular audience. Nevertheless there is a chance that you may have heard me say some of this before … If so I do apologise.

I might also note here that there will be a print version of this address made available via the website – but it won’t be exactly the same as what I say to day – and it’s not there just yet!
Preamble

When Nicola McCartney, our Associate Director, suggested I should take the final keynote address at our symposium – on the second day. I agreed. But being asked to deliver the final keynote is a mixed blessing. Once upon a time I had a little cartoon pinned on the wall behind my desk. I tried to find it to use today – but I couldn’t locate it.

The cartoon showed a guy in class with his hand up – and he says, “Please Sir, can I leave now? My brain is full!”

At this time there is always the danger that people have had enough, particularly after two days; people might finish up wishing they had taken flight earlier – or in some cases, taken the earlier flight … So I hope you don’t feel that way when we get to the end.

What I’d like to do in the next half hour or so, is share with you some stories.

I think of research as a form of storytelling. We don’t always think of research as telling a story, but it does. A research report is always someone’s story. It is crafted to convey a message. Sometimes researchers are unaware of themselves as storytellers, and sometimes they’re not very good at the crafting, but that is another matter.

One of my Australian adult education colleagues, Peter Willis talks about adult education researchers who squeeze the juice out of the lived experience of adult education. They present thin, desiccated research reports which fail to reflect the richness, the challenge and complexity of teaching and learning. He writes,

In the course of two decades of adult education practice many experiences I encountered were challenging, disquieting and often exhilarating. When I took up academic study of adult education, there seemed few texts that carried its colour, risk and adventure. (Willis, 1998:3)

Like Willis, I am interested in research stories which retain the juices, and present the experience of life (and work) warts and all – which is why my doctoral thesis carried cartoons, poems and journal extracts as well as critical analysis of political and academic discourse. I wanted my research to reflect the stories we were living. I wanted it to be personal and political, I am interested in the interplay between public and private literacies – and how they inform one another.

As a child I was taught that there are ‘two sides to every story’ – I’ve since learned that there can be more than two, and that often there are important ‘sides’ to a story that are left untold. I also learned, as a child, that ‘telling tales’ could get me into trouble. ‘Telling Tales’, I learned, was akin to telling lies. Although such tales could be engaging, entertaining, sometimes even useful, they were not entirely truthful. Often the deceit was not so much in saying things that were not true, but rather in not saying things that were true.

So I have come to research as a storyteller, one committed to crafting and telling rich stories; stories which as far as possible are true. I do recognise, however, that I may be perceived as ‘telling tales’. A story is always told from a particular point of view and in various ways it positions the listener – or the reader. It can be helpful to be mindful of these positionings.
Over the last several weeks I have been involved in a process of discovery; trying to find the story (or stories) I want to tell today. Some time ago now I saw Rolf de Heer’s wonderful film *10 Canoes*. In this movie he plays with the idea of story telling and he wraps one story inside another. At one point the narrator, David Gulpilil, tells us that his tale has grown into a *full* story, like a big old tree, with many branches.

I love the idea that a big story always has other stories inside it - there are stories within stories; and more stories off to the side; there are versions which don’t often get told – there are ‘branches’ not explored. So it will be today …

My friend and colleague Nicola McCartney, who is also our Associate Director, also suggested that if I took the final session maybe I could somehow ‘pull it all together’. It’s a nice idea, it might be helpful if my story here was making sense of everything that’s gone before in the symposium … but I’m not sure that it’s entirely possible.

**Introduction: ‘Making sense’ is personal**

Part of the difficulty of course is that ‘making sense’ is something that we can’t really do for others – people have to make sense of things for themselves. We all have our individual ways of making sense – and something that makes sense to me, might not make sense to you – and vice versa – and it’s also possible that we might both make sense of it – but the sense we make of it might be quite different. Making sense is tricky.

Language is about making sense and literacy and numeracy are about making sense — but we can’t very effectively use *other people’s* sense of things – we need to build our own.

The great Brazilian adult educator, Paulo Freire, reminds us that making sense involves more than reading the word, or reading numbers. It means reading the context, the circumstances and the purposes of the words and the numbers. We need to read text and context; we need to read the *word* and read the *world*.

Let me tell you a little story about reading the word and reading the world.

I have just finished reading a wonderful novel, by Jean Auel, called *The Valley of the Painted Caves*. I think it’s a marvellous story, it’s rich and it’s insightful and it’s entertaining. If you haven’t discovered Jean Auel, I recommend you check out the *Clan of the Cave Bear* and her other books. I think she’s an extraordinary writer.

In this book the principle character is Ayla – She is a remarkable woman whose life and story we follow, beginning in *The Clan of the Cave Bear*. In this book Ayla spends a full year carefully observing and recording the movement of the Sun, the Moon, and the stars. As part of her training she tracks precisely where the sun rises and sets on the horizon every day. And she makes her marks to record the positions – Ayla is *literally reading and writing the world* – and by doing this she ‘discovers’ (as others have discovered before her) the patterns and the significance of the Summer Long Day and the Winter Short Day.

I was reading this just recently, close to the time of the Winter Solstice, and so this text really resonated for me – because the winter solstice is a very special time of year for me.

It is special because in 1992 my Mother passed away just before the Winter Short Day.

I would like to share with you something I wrote several years ago in my journal I’ve never shared this piece before. I’m not sure what I wrote it for. … Perhaps, many years ago, I wrote it for today …
I thought of my fourteen year old daughter’s reaction to her Grandmother’s death, she was just a baby when the melanoma was diagnosed. I sat in my study with my journal and looked out the window - the sky was thick with heavy thunder clouds and it was almost dark - and it was only four thirty in the afternoon. Why did she die so close to the winter solstice? The winter solstice has new meaning for me now and it will carry this meaning for the rest of my life. I thought of the reaction of family and friends, my sister laughing and crying at the same time, claiming she was allowed because she’s the “baby” of the family - she was 34 at the time. Why was it that my wife had not been able to work on the patchwork quilt she was making for mum, the one in the shape of a star? How much did it matter that it wasn’t finished? What did it mean that mum and dad’s young friends, their close neighbours, had a baby born to them on the night mum died; a baby born just moments after mum died, what did that mean? What of my father, who had nursed mum through amputations, crisis and trauma over all these years? Was it his love of the old windjammers and the romance of the sea that made me think of tides and the ebb and flow of life?

I imagine some of you may relate to my confusion and grief - the fact that we knew it was going to happen did not make it any easier in the end. She was too young, some of her grandchildren never had the chance to know her. To the end she never complained, she never had a bitter word. She used the very last ounces of energy she had to give away smiles from her deathbed to family and friends. How do you understand such grace, and courage, and generosity?

For me, it all made sense in “Winter Stars” – which was written, or addressed, to the Winter Short Day

Winter Stars

for Valda May Waterhouse
(6.1.1931 - 11.6.1992)

“She was the strongest woman I ever knew and probably ever will.” Grand-daughter, Emma Louise.

Winter Solstice, you bring heavy skies
to close down the shortest day and stretch out the longest night. You seem Minder to Death and Darkness. Yet however steely blue-grey tough, and cold, you might pretend to be --you do not fool me.

Your time is short, from this week onward, days are longer, Light and Life grow stronger. You may claim the prize you carry off, but already Love the Trickster has made a mockery of you, bringing gorgeous new Life in soft pink murmurings, and so Love multiplies.

You break strong hearts with malignant malice. Sadly, you do not know such hearts are filled with Love and the agony of heartbreak releases sunbursts which give warmth and strength to the embrace of Family and Friends. Tear streaked cheeks still smile. Laughter will wriggle through unexpected. Oh you are a cruel fool. ...
But as for the prey you thought you'd claimed ...  
She is no more yours than a ship which sails  
out upon the tide.  
She rides upon your back to speed her journey  
and she steers her course to the stars.  

© P.J. Waterhouse  
June 1991  

Why share such a personal story at a literacy symposium? Is this relevant?
ultimately this is a decision you must make for yourself.

But for me this is about literacy – and the power of literacy and numeracy. If we are involved in adult literacy and numeracy education I believe we have a responsibility to demonstrate the ways that literacy and numeracy have meaning in our lives. We need to show (I believe) that literacy and numeracy can be personally meaningful and powerful. It’s not just about filling forms – or calculating percentages, however important those tasks might be.

Reading and writing in my journal (even though I don’t have an audience beyond myself) is a way of making sense and making meaning.

Writing “Winter Stars” was a way of making sense.

I have come to believe that literacy is for making sense of the world and it is for taking that sense back into the world,
sharing it,
shaping it,
building upon it,
and improving it ...  

But reading the world can be difficult and painful. How can we ‘make sense’ of death?

Or, how do we make sense of the ground shaking and turning to soup, great cathedrals falling down, hundreds of innocent people being killed? How do we make sense of that? We have friends and colleagues here who were there, in Christchurch that fateful day. Damon who was there – said to me, “It did my head in”.

How do we make sense of it? Some may say that Rūaumoko is angry, for some people that makes sense; but for others that may not be so helpful. Others may speak of tectonic plates and continental drift; yet for others that explanation may be totally meaningless...

But perhaps that’s an extreme example, perhaps it’s an unfair example – everyone knows it’s hard to makes sense of death and earthquakes.

What about something simpler, what about something like teaching and learning and the education and training systems and workplaces we practice within? We can make sense of that can’t we?

Let me offer you another poem written by an adult literacy tutor trying to ‘read the world’

- and also trying to write his mark upon it as well.

It’s called, Dear Director ...
Dear Director, Dean, Manager, or Principal,

Re: Employment Opportunities

Might you have a vacancy for a reflective practitioner?
I'm learning to navigate Schon's swamp,
to recognise corporate crocodiles and avoid administrative quicksand.
I'm becoming a critical thinker,
awakened to the discourses of power and privilege.
I've mastered my TLAs*
TEC, ITP, ITOs and the rest.
I'm right into Managing Change.
I'll be clever and creative if I can,
willing to give re-training and multi-skilling a go.

It seems there are two categories under which I might apply,
Casual or Contract.
I have only two questions.

If you said I could be a Casual Employee
and I came in casual, wearing shorts, thongs and T-shirt,
stashed my Esky under the desk, put my feet up and said,
OK dudes - what's on today?
You'd say I wasn't professional and show me
how casual, is easily made into casualty.

Yet when I rush between jobs
hot and flustered in city traffic jams:
when my mind is fractured into half a dozen different desks,
in different places, with different faces,
and what I want is always at the last one:
when I'm forced to make a hostage
of my professionalism and cram it into a cardboard box
in the boot of my car:
when my spouse spits the dummy at the endless
unpaid hours of preparation & development
and I am torn - because I respect my students
and I want to do it for them:
when I experience all of this,
it doesn't seem very casual to me.

So I ask,
For whom is casual employment casual?

But perhaps you say I can go on Contract.
If so I can offer you professional commitment and competence,
integrity and loyalty dedication to the work.
Yet it seems your contract
leaves little room for strategic planning,
with staff security shrunk to single semesters.
Curriculum Development is reduced to
punching out packages for "flexible delivery"
based on the tender training
and Professional Development
doesn't rate a mention in your contract,
though I'm sure you'll support me
with smiles and words of encouragement.
I notice your contract falls just short of my vacation, but worse, far worse,
it falls well short of my vocation.

I'm ready to work; prepared to be challenged and stretched
expanded to meet new horizons and to continue developing.

And so my second question is,
Why would you want to contract
my professionalism and my profession?

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February 1994

It may be of interest for you to know this poem was written in 1994 – that's surprising to me, because it's a long time ago now – 17 years ago; and yet it still seems fresh and relevant doesn't it? What's more surprising still (to me) is that this poem was written by an adult literacy practitioner exactly 17 years younger than I am now – and he would have been very surprised to know that in time he would become the Director to whom his poem was addressed.

So there is irony here as well. We are still wrestling with our systems, we are still challenged by the constraints on our work. We are challenged by funding constraints, staffing constraints, time constraints, contractual limitations, position descriptions, political constraints – I was wrestling with these things before I wrote the poem and twenty years later I'm still in the same wrestling match … and still we are trying to make a difference.

Sometimes it feels like we are taking one step forward and sliding two steps back.

But when I feel that way I can recall being involved in discussions to establish the Victorian Adult Literacy Council in Melbourne in about 1979 – and all of the paid adult literacy workers in Victoria came together for a meeting. We met in Sam Thomas's office, with a bit of cheese and a bottle of red – and I think there were six of us.

Then a few years ago I was honoured to be asked to deliver the keynote address for the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council, at Victoria University, in Melbourne. There were about two hundred people at that event – representing dozens of providers from across the State and thousands of adult learners. So I can see that things have developed.

They have developed enough for New Zealand to be able to recruit a distinguished Professor of Adult Education to be a Director of the National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults, at the University of Waikato.

They have developed enough for us to have so many passionate and committed people here today … and for everyone one of us here now there are a number of other people who would have liked to have been here today – but couldn't make it. So development is definitely taking place.
The role of the National Centre

I want to speak for just a few minutes about the role of the National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults in this development – because we certainly do not want to ‘contract’ our profession, or our professionalism.

On the contrary, we want to build the profession and build capacity and capability – and in using terms like profession and professionalism I am mindful also of the role of volunteers in this sector. I note this because in my view the best of our volunteers are thoroughly ‘professional’ in their approach and their practice. It’s not whether, or how much, someone is paid that determines the quality of what they do.

Nevertheless, in my experience for volunteers to practice effectively and for them to provide high quality service there is a need for good quality infrastructure, there’s a need for support, training, professional development, research, resources, and so on -

So we are interested in capacity building and making a difference.

Some of you have heard me say this before, but I will keep saying it; for me the National Centre sits in the middle of a dynamic (and contested) space which might be represented by a triangle. (As I will explore in a minute, it can be represented in other ways too!) … But if we stick with the triangle for a minute I suggest it is made up of a focus on Practice, a focus on Research and a focus on Policy.

Our challenge is to have all of these things connected and informing one another.

The National Centre has six strategic goals. These are to:

- provide high quality professional learning opportunities,
- develop internationally referenced but locally relevant qualifications,
- deliver a highly relevant research programme,
- provide policy advice to agencies nationally and internationally,
- develop high-quality learning resources, and
- facilitate strong national and international partnerships.

These goals are important. However the way we operate, how we realise these goals, or how we strive to attain them, is also fundamentally important.

Most people here will be aware that I am still a new chum on the landscape here – and my Co-director (as we have discussed) is yet to take up her position. We are right now in the process of developing a plan, a strategy, for the sustainability of the National Centre 2012 to 2016 and beyond.

We need to secure funds and support from the government, the University, and from other sources as well, for the National Centre to continue. The strategy is not finalised, formalised or agreed – So I am not in a position to talk here about that plan, nor how the goals are going to be realised. However what I can say is that as Director, I believe the National Centre can make a valuable and continuing contribution to adult education in New Zealand.

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I believe our best prospects of doing this lie in adopting a mindset that says we are here:

- to be of service
- to inform & educate
- to add value
- to promote critical literacies & numeracies
- to develop & demonstrate inclusive bi-cultural, or multi-cultural, practices
- to identify, encourage & facilitate synergies & connections
- to be 'owned' & valued by the sector
- to promote evidence-based policy & practice
- to practice & promote critical reflection & program evaluation
- to provide informed leadership.

This list may not be complete; these might not be quite the right words; but all of my engagements in New Zealand so far have given me cause to be very optimistic, to be very confident, that values like these will be those that drive the National Centre forward.

This is not to say that we have all of the answers. We don’t. No one does. We are struggling to make a difference too.

I think it’s helpful to appreciate that the work in which we are engaged isn’t simple. Peter Senge (1990) wrote about the challenges of working within complex systems. In the Fifth discipline he describes a workshop participant coming to this realisation.

“All my life, I assumed that somebody, somewhere, knew the answer to this problem. I thought politicians knew what had to be done, but refused to do it out of politics and greed. But now I realize that nobody knows the answer. Not us, not them, not anybody. (Senge 1990:282)

Senge goes on to explain,

Most people have grown up in an authoritarian environment. As children, their parents had ‘the answers’. As students their teachers had the answers. Naturally when they enter organizations, they assume that ‘the boss’ must have the answers. (Senge 1990:282)

However the difficulty lies in the nature of the problems we are trying to address. Senge, drawing upon the work of Schumacher, explains that there are different types of problems; convergent problems and divergent problems. With a convergent problem, he says, the more you study and investigate it, the more the answers converge. There appears to be a preferred or best solution – and experts can agree.

However when divergent problems are studied they produce divergent, or different answers. Senge reports,

Schumaker’s favourite example of a classic divergent problem is ‘How do you most effectively educate children?’ Different people of integrity and intelligence will, inevitably, come to very different conclusions. (Senge 1990:284)
Becoming a Researcher: Making sense in a complex world

In adult literacy and numeracy education we are engaged in complex social and institutional settings, which by their very nature tend to frame divergent problems.

In my own PhD research I came across a number of different researchers, writers and academics (including Senge) who reinforced, in various ways, the idea that we need to learn to live with complexity, tensions, contradictions and sometimes even paradox.

I’ve also come to appreciate that things are often not quite what they appear to be. They are rarely as simple, or straightforward, as they seem to be from the ‘outside’. Law (1994) for instance, argues that

... the social, all the social world, is complex and messy. ... Pools of order are illusory, but even such illusions are the exception. They do not last for long. They are pretty limited. And they are the product, the outcome, or the effect, of a lot of work - work that may occasionally be more or less successfully hidden behind an appearance of ordered simplicity. (Law 1994:5)

One of the most useful questions, I find, is “What’s really going on?” Because what’s really going on – is rarely what appears to be obvious. We need to develop a robust tolerance for dealing with the ambiguity, contradiction and the paradox of life.

Charles Handy argues that complex, multiple understandings are essential for coping with the constant paradoxes of our times. He suggests that:

The acceptance of paradox as a feature of life is the first step towards living with it and managing it. I used to think that paradoxes were the visible signs of an imperfect world, a world which would, one day, be better understood by us and better organised. (Handy 1995:17)

He says he ‘no longer believe[s] in the ...possibility of perfection’. Paradox, he suggests, is ‘inevitable, endemic and perpetual’. He now thinks about paradoxes as more like the weather – not so much to solved – but things that need to be accommodated.

Handy is not alone in this reading of the world - although others tend to name the complexity differently. Well known (Australian) radio broadcaster, public intellectual and sceptic Phillip Adams articulates the dilemma this way.

One of the problems as I get older ... is the longer I live, the more complicated, multi-layered issues are, and the more difficulty you have pulling out a simple synthesis. And I find almost every view I hear, to some degree, plausible. You know I find almost every argument to some degree persuasive and seductive. Now that doesn't mean I'm an imbecile, it simply means that I think that's how complicated reality is. And I think you've got to layer paradigms one on top of the other before you've got any hope of really seeing how things really are ... it's important I think, to admit to complexity, to admit to difficulties, to admit to shades of grey. (Adams & Dessaix 1997:8-9)

Donald Schön (1987) uses a different metaphor to discuss similar ideas. He discusses the swamp and the importance of critical reflection.

In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the application of research based theory and technique. In the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution. (Schön 1987, p.3).

These lowland areas, Schön suggests, may be described as ‘indeterminate zones of practice’. They are characterised by uniqueness, uncertainty, ambiguity and value conflict. They seem to defy simplistic explanation, they are problematic in multiple ways simultaneously. Technical, personal, social, environmental and economic variables for instance may all impinge upon a situation so that the
obvious solution (even if one can be identified) is not available because it would contradict or compromise other variables. Such solutions would work in the textbook example on the high ground, but not in the swamp. Yet Schön suggests:

It is just these indeterminate zones of practice, however, that practitioners and critical observers have come to see with increasing clarity over the past two decades as central to professional practice. (op. cit., p.7)

Schön’s research suggests that the real world situations which most professionals confront do not conform to the simple assumptions of texts and conventional problem solving models. He points out how these models don’t seem to hold for most real life design contexts which, he argues, are loaded with

the kind of complexity I will call figural, where addition or subtraction of one element changes the functional meaning of other elements with the result that the proposal must be considered different as a whole. (Schön 1990, p.121)

According to his analysis a rich and holistic approach is required to account for the complexity and interrelatedness of the many factors impinging upon problems in real world practice. Problems do not stand independently, they’re not simple, and generally the complexity is not merely a question of the number of factors or variables but their inter-relationships. He notes:

When do conditions of independence and simplicity, or additive complexity, hold true? They hold for problems artificially constructed to make them hold. (op. cit., p.122.)

Given such complexity in everyday life Schön is interested in how practitioners learn not only to cope, but to thrive in the ‘swamp’. His analysis suggests that particularly skilled or competent professionals develop a kind of ‘artistry’ which underpins their practice. This artistry embraces ‘problem framing’, ‘implementation’ and ‘improvisation’ in a relatively seamless praxis of reflection and action. It’s this process by the way, which Ray Avery describes in his work building world class pharmaceutical manufacturing plants in Nepal and Eritrea.

Schön refers to reflection-in-action to describe this form of practice (1987:29).

Associate Professor Terri Seddon, at Monash University in Melbourne, talks about the importance of “working the contradictions” which I find a useful idea.

David Boud (2006) another Australia researcher, discusses what he calls “Productive Reflection”. He says,

There is an assumption about a formal course that someone somewhere knows how to do it. What productive reflection is focussed on are issues that no-one knows, no-one anywhere knows, how to do it. It is about people coming together to address these unknown issues. Productive reflection is not a linear process, it’s a process of looking at problems, dilemmas and issues … and the learning comes from the felt experience of the group. (David Boud quoted by John Mitchell in Campus Review, 2006 Vol 16, No.27).

So we need to better understand what’s really going on – because it’s rarely as simple or straightforward as it might seem - and need to be able to engage with the field, to connect research, and theory, and policy to practice and we need to critically review and explore the implications – work the contradictions … Productive reflection is a collaborative process, it’s about making sense and making a difference.
A ‘Framework’ for Making Difference

After nearly a decade of playing with these sorts of ideas in my PhD work I was required to form a conclusion for the thesis.

What I came up with was a set of principles, or elements – or even ‘ingredients’ for good practice. Indeed it was more than that – I called it (perhaps rather grandly) ‘A Framework for Building Alternative Futures’. To link this more explicitly to the theme of our symposium we could equally as well call it a framework for Making a difference!

The elements of good practice I identified were drawn from my research, from the case studies of adult education and adult literacy practice which I constructed. They were all elements or characteristics which I identified in my ‘reading of the world’, things observed – and noted down (like Ayla noting the rising and setting of the Moon). These elements are not imaginary or aspirational – although it is aspirational to expect that all of these elements could come together in one place, at one time, in one project, or programme.

There is not the time here to fully explore all of these elements, or ingredients. I have already highlighted some aspects, such as the importance of recognising and learning to live with complexity and ambiguity; and the importance of critical reflection, engagement and thoughtfulness.

I think it’s very important to keep shifting our lenses, changing perspective, engaging both the micro and the macro perspective is very important. It’s like saying we need to be grounded, but we also need the helicopter view¹.

Intelligent leadership is tremendously important and so is humility.

Collective and community action is tremendously important. It is extremely are for individuals to be able to change the world on their own; a sense of community, solidarity and collective action is essential – which is why relationships are so important. Genuine dialogue and trust is so important.

These elements, in my mind, are not fixed or static. I see this as a flexible set of informing principles or ideas that is fluid, dynamic, changing shape and form and colour according to context and circumstances.

It’s a complex, challenging, sometimes contradictory mix that seems to be required.

There’s not time to discuss fully all of these elements – however there is an aspect that is only rarely discussed; which I think is so important … In my ‘framework’ I identified the importance of creativity and courage. I talked about the importance of innovation – of doing things differently – and the creativity it takes to envision an alternative and the courage it takes to pursue that vision, to stick with it and make it real.

¹ They illustrate this beautifully in the TV Programme “Time Team” – which is about archaeology
Figure 8.1
Building 'Alternative' Futures

Mature Acceptance of Paradox
- recognition of opportunity in crisis & chaos (Handy, Peters)
- willingness for considered risk taking, preparation to engage contradictions (Seddon)

Appreciation of Multiplicity
- mature acceptance of Complexity utilising diverse & creative strategies
- interdisciplinary perspectives
- methodological pluralism (Darrah)
- multiliteracies (New London Group)
- multiple intelligences & forms of expression (Gardner)
- polytheistic perspectives (Neville)

Value Placed Upon Relationships
- empathy & unconditional positive regard (Rogers et al)
- building trust genuine dialogue (Freire et al)
- negotiating programs/activities
- maintenance & repair of relationships

Creativity & Courage
- preparedness to innovate & take risks, capacity for frame braking & mindquakes (Theobald)
- inspiration from the arts, the vision to see
- the courage to act

Collective & Community Action
- making a difference building community expressing solidarity (Freire et al)
- taking action defining the enemy (Newman)

Intelligent Leadership
- (Mant)
- authority
- purpose
- judgement
- systems thinking
- sanity
- broad band intelligence
- virtuous circle

Engagement & Thoughtfulness
- capacity for intelligent discussion of rationale, theory, personal-professional values, the stance underpinning action
- a sense of 'principled' vocation (Collins, Freire et al.)
- a critical reflectivity, preparedness to ask Why? & Why not? (Freire, Shor, Horton et al.)
- use of 'critical literacy' skills

Intelligent Humility
- not claiming universality, ‘best for now’, confident tentativeness
- good practice =
- best practice, sensitivity to cross cultural & inter-discursive constructions

Appreciation of the Micro Perspective
- practical & grounded action (Schon, Kemmis & McTaggart)
- context based curriculum (Setton et al, Darrah, Jackson)
- sensitive indigenous developments which are locally owned, programs/activities
- engaging local interests, responsive to local culture etc. (Brice-Heath, Gowen), sensitive to local ‘ways with words’ & multi-literacies, negotiated programs based on dialogue (Freire, Rogers et al)
- useful (helpful) developments responsive to here & now (Theobald)

Appreciation of the Macro Perspective
- a longer term vision (Suzuki, Mant, Handy et al.)
- recognition of wider interests & stakeholders, a sense of ‘selflessness’ (Saul)
- inward-outward looking, external awareness, local, regional, global, networks (Handy, Peters, Suzuki et al)
- links to communities of interest (Theobald)

Good practice will be characterised by an authentic stance which reflects:

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Bookshelves & Biographies

Given that making a difference is complex, sometimes contradictory and challenging, where do we find the voices which sustain us? How do we nourish our professional and personal identities, and renew our sense of vocation? Where do we find the courage and the creativity to keep going? For me some of those missing voices can be found on bookshelves, and in particular, in autobiographies. I thought it might be useful to share just a few of them …

I wonder whether other people are as fascinated as I am with what’s on other people’s bookshelves? To me, browsing someone else’s bookshelf is like being given a window into their life.

So what might we find? What stories of strength and inspiration do we have to draw upon?

There are so many it’s hard to know where to start. John Bertrand’s (1986) story in Born To Win is one of my inspirational texts. In the book Bertrand describes how he used the power of positive imagination to take his Australian crew to a place and a level of performance which was quite unprecedented. He discusses how he learned to recognise and build upon the particular strengths of individual members of his crew. So (for me) that autobiography is one source of the positive voices.

Or perhaps we could talk about how Erik Weihenmayer became a serious mountain climber and successfully scaled some of the world highest summits to Touch the Top of the World. Nothing exceptional perhaps, except for the fact that Eric is blind. Weihenmayer’s story – which he says shouldn’t be inspirational, actually is – and in places it’s amusing as well. He talks about trekking at high altitude with one of his climbing partners – and they changed places so that the rangers observing them would think his partner was the blind climber.

As we arrived [says Weihenmayer] I was walking in front of Hans, my feet braced for any random terrain … Hans stumbled along behind me, butt out, head bobbed forward, swinging the hiking poles wildly in front of him. … We were both laughing as we thought of the rangers watching in awkward silence the two gringos, the guide almost as clumsy as the blind man he was supposed to be leading. (Weihenmayer, 2001:272-3)

Or perhaps, closer to our world, we might talk about David Pescud, (O’Neill 2003) another Australian sailor who runs Sailors with disAbilities. David eloquently describes his early school experiences as a living hell. In primary school he was repeatedly caned for ‘refusing’ to read and spell correctly. By 16 he was suicidal. Then at 17 he was diagnosed with profound dyslexia.

Yet Pescud went on to become a successful business person and by 45 had earned enough to retire and pursue his dream of sailing full-time. He then went onto establish Sailors with disAbilities. He has a passionate belief that disability is a state of mind.
In the infamous 1998 Sydney to Hobart race he skippered a crew which included an amputee, a blind man and a 12 year old dyslexic boy. The cyclone in the Southern Ocean that ripped apart the fleet that year sank five boats; and six sailors lost their lives. Only 43 of the 115 yachts who commenced the race managed to finish. Pescud and his crew not only survived, they won their category.

Or perhaps I should talk about Sir Edmund Hilary, a legendary mountain of a man whose humanitarian achievements and extraordinary life-lived inspire us to aspire to greater heights of our own; to believe that what others have considered impossible is indeed possible with courage, perseverance, and imagination.

Or perhaps I could talk about the remarkable Ray Avery, A Rebel with a Cause, New Zealander of the Year in 2010. Here is a man who had such a disturbing and troubled childhood, so filled with abuse and neglect, that he found no peace at all until he ran away and lived by himself under a bridge. Yet he went on to become a scientist, an inventor, a global humanitarian and social entrepreneur whose work has saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. His story is an inspiration.

These are just some of the texts of my life. I find these stories enriching. In various ways these individuals have found ways to identify and harness their strengths. Their stories are sources of inspiration … and I shall return to a few others in closing …
Individuality & Contradicting the Stereotype

But what else is on my bookshelf? What other stories of strength and inspiration? A couple of years ago my colleague Crina Virgona and I conducted a study in which we were privileged to hear the life stories of individuals who, like David Pescud mentioned earlier, have built successful lives for themselves despite significant and continuing frustrations with English literacy.

We argued in this report that these individuals were ‘positively deviant’ and that they were “Contradicting the Stereotype” of individuals with literacy difficulties. This research showed that although it is difficult, success is possible – despite ‘illiteracy’.

There is not sufficient time here today to explore these case studies - but they are available on a CD-ROM as a series of digital stories. The stories use the voices of the individuals who contributed to the study. I commend them to you and the CD_ROM is readily available, included with every hard copy of the report available from NCVER. It’s not very expensive and you can order it on-line at: http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1590.html

Given that they had not mastered ‘literacy’ - we were interested in the strategies that these individuals used to attain their success. They included:

- the use of networks and relationships;
- the use of new technologies;
- personal resilience was a key factor in the face of multiple knock-backs and put-downs;
- however a key theme to emerge was the way individuals learned to identify and leverage their own particular strengths.

The ‘contradictions’ study lead us deeper into an exploration of strength-based practice. At this point in my story-tree we have three branches forking off – each worthy of exploration in it’s own right – and we don’t have enough time to discuss any of them thoroughly.

The three branches are about:

- Resilience
- Multiple Intelligences, &
- Identity formation

I’ll just say a few words about each of these branches (each warrant further exploration) …

Resilience

The first branch going off here is about resilience. If we were going to follow this branch I would point to other books on the shelf and prime among them would be Anne Deveson’s (2003) beautiful, moving and enriching book, simply titled Resilience.

The research literature talks about resilience as a personal, psychological quality
but also as a capacity built through relationships, networking, social and community engagements. Deveson’s extraordinary series of portraits gives us an intimate insight into these processes. I cannot recommend it too highly.

Interestingly, David Pescud, says of himself, in the opening paragraph of his autobiography, *Life Without Limits*;

> All I knew was that no one was going to stop me. I’ve been like that pretty much ever since. Stubborn, pig-headed, crystal clear about where I’m going and why. And God help anybody who gets in my way. (O’Neill 2003:1)

So it appears that, at least in some respects, Pescud has firm control – and despite his difficulties (or maybe because of them), he has had this psychological strength from a very early age.

Erik Weihenmayer the mountaineer on the other hand, talks about the importance of his mother, as a fiercely protective lioness; and his father, who was “like a broom sweeping me out into the world” (2001:21). He highlights the importance of his father reading to him. He recalls,

> Some fathers read aloud to their sons from fairy tales or nursery rhymes, but my dad would sit me on his knee and read me his favourite poem.

**Don’t Quit**

> When things go wrong as they sometimes will,  
> When the road you’re trudging seems all uphill,  
> When the funds are low and the debts are high,  
> And you want to smile, but have to sigh,  
> When care is pressing you down a bit –  
> Rest if you must, but don’t you quit.

> Life is queer with its twists and turns,  
> As every one of us sometimes learns;  
> And many a fellow turns about  
> When he might have won, had he stuck it out.  
> Don’t give up though the pace seems slow –  
> You may succeed with another blow.

> Often the goal is nearer than  
> It seems to a faint and faltering man;  
> Often the struggler has given up  
> When he might have captured the victor’s cup;  
> And he learned too late when the night came down,  
> How close he was to the golden crown.

> Success is failure turned inside out  
> The silver tint on the clouds of doubt,  
> And you never can tell how close you are,  
> It may be near when it seems afar;  
> So stick to the fight when you’re hardest hit –  
> It’s when things seem worst that you musn’t quit.

Gardner, leadership & multiple intelligence theory

The second branch highlighted by the individuals contradicting the stereotype concerns Howard Gardner (1985) and his theory of multiple intelligences. Clearly their success could not be attributed to their mastery of literacy – they were all still struggling on this front. One of the bodies of research and theory that we found helpful in understanding what they were doing was supplied by Gardner.

Traditional IQ tests, Gardner argues, have really only considered, or measured, a relatively small part of human intelligence. Most IQ tests assess what he calls a ‘narrow band’ of intelligence and such tests are usually strongly language or logic based. They are also almost inevitably culturally biased. And they usually produce a single score on a scale.

Gardner identifies different kinds of intelligence based upon a rigorous set of scientific criteria (which we are not going to explore here). He says,

“Noadays … researchers believe precisely the opposite; that there exists a multitude of intelligences, quite independent of each other; that each intelligence has its own strengths and constraints” (Gardner 1993: xxiii)

Gardner originally identified seven core intelligences: The first two of these are commonly measured in traditional IQ type tests, namely:

- **Linguistic intelligence** – the intelligence of authors, poets, speech writers, speech makers, story tellers and orators;
- **Logical-mathematical** – the intelligence of mathematicians and physicists.

However Gardner also goes on to talk about:

- **Spatial intelligence** the ability to ‘read’ or see, & understand relationships in space; height, width, depth; proportion, angles and so on … The intelligence of the artist, the architect, the engineer, or like our case study individuals – the bridge builder and the graphic designer;

Then there is the **bodily-kinesthetic intelligence** of the dancer, the athlete; think (for instance) of David Beckham in football, or the great dancers … Or think of the extraordinary French mime artist Marcel Marceau, a man who united movement, poetry and silence;

Then there is **musical intelligence** – the ability to understand, interpret and create music – some people are particularly gifted in this domain. I saw a wonderful movie called August Rush about a child musical prodigy – who could ‘hear the music’ in the world all around him;

Gardner also wrote about what he called the **personal intelligences**: interpersonal – the ability to ‘read’, relate to, understand and appreciate social and interpersonal dynamics; and also intrapersonal – the ability to know self, to know and manage effectively one’s own emotions and intellectual life. This notion of EQ or emotional intelligence has been taken up by others, including Daniel Goleman (1996) who has written about it extensively.

In 1999 Gardner added an eighth, **the naturalistic intelligence**, which is concerned with understanding the natural world, the environment, with its rhythms, patterns and order of things.

Gardner has noted that many, perhaps most formal educational systems tend to focus on a relatively narrow band of intelligence, particularly the first two. As a consequence many students’ abilities in other domains may be unidentified and relatively undeveloped.

Later Gardner applied his multiple intelligence theory to the study of leadership (Gardner 1997).
The individuals in the *Contradicting the Stereotype* study would say of themselves that they were not so strong on the language and literacy front. As a consequence schooling was a pretty miserable experience for most of them - but they identified successfully and built upon their other strengths, including their:

- Creative, artistic and visual intelligence
- Inter-personal, team building and relationship management skills
- Resilience, intra-personal intelligence and knowledge of self
- Spatial and practical intelligence

**Identity: personal & professional**

The third branch to explore briefly here is about issues of identity, identification and ownership. It is about personal and public identity/ies. Becoming ‘literate’ is not simply a matter of skills acquisition, it is a matter of identity. Conceiving oneself as reader and writer is important. *Literacy is socially and culturally shaped and yet it must be personally constructed.*

Literacy is intimately tied up with issues of identity. Human learning and change processes are complex. I’ve known people to be highly motivated for change in their lives – people who desperately want change; but they *continue to behave in ways that prevent the changes they desire from taking place.*

It is easy to accuse these people of being hypocrites – it’s easy to say they’re ‘not fair dinkum’. But Argyris and Schön (insert reference) have demonstrated that we can be completely unaware of the gaps between what we think (and say) we believe and what we actually do in practice. So even with massive gaps between rhetoric and practice, we can still be sincere. Here’s one researcher commenting on this issue in an insightful way,

> scientists firmly believe that as long as they are not conscious of any bias or political agenda, they are neutral and objective, when in fact they are only unconscious. (Namenwirth cited by Lather 1991, p.10)

I like that quote because it’s kind of funny … But if you think about it we can change the word ‘scientists’ and insert other words and the statement still works. We can place the quote in a feminist context and say ‘men’ and it still works doesn’t it girls? Or we could place the statement in the context of cross-cultural, or race relations and it still works. If you think about it you could replace the word ‘scientists’ with the word ‘people’ and the statement still works – and this is our challenge – because we make assumptions, we all take things for granted – and if we’re not aware – we can all be part of the problem.

Not very long after I started my teaching career a colleague of mine introduced me to friend. Years later recalling that experience I wrote …
Teacher’s Friend

It was years ago now,
A colleague, in her kitchen,
introduced a neighbour.
A massive agrarian beast of a man;
boney and weather-beaten,
with copious hairs sprouting
from his nose and ears.
He could mend a fence,
or pull a calf,
or a tooth,
with equal practicality.

He lumbered forward,
towering over the pale young professional
from the university.
He extended a huge leathery hand,
“So you’d be another bloody teacher then wouldn’ ya?”

Well, I replied, smiling bravely,
“You won’t hold that against me will you?”

“That depends entirely,” he replied,
as he squeezed my hand with his steely gaze
“on what you’re teachin’ ’em son.”.

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So there’s a challenge here – to live the examined life, to be aware, to be self aware. If we’re not careful we might become part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

When it comes to significant change there are usually issues of identity involved. I know I want to change, I need to change, but the desired changes require me to do things I don’t normally do – they require me to be a different sort of person – someone I’ve not been before – someone that’s not really me … that’s difficult.

It’s difficult to consciously ‘unlearn’ who we are; it’s uncomfortable and challenging to recognise how who we are might be part of the problem. To make these shifts requires new skills in re-cognition and appreciation of self, the ability to perceive self (and others) differently. We have to see existing behaviours in a new light and appreciate different behaviours through a different lens.

Some of the people whose work and lives I most appreciate have wrestled with these issues of self – and self management. Ray Avery (20101) talks about this in his book, Rebel With A Cause. It is also a theme powerfully evident in the life-work of Nelson Mandella (1995, 2010) who has said that the most difficult and challenging work he has had to do – is not the work on others – He says it was the work he had to do on himself.
Sidney Poiter’s story is fascinating. He tells of his early life as small boy on Cat Island – and how he was fascinated to see his own reflection for the first time, in a mirror, when he was nine years old. Poitier also had significant barriers and challenges to overcome in his distinguished career. He talks about what he calls ‘true progress’. Consider what he says,

“True progress doesn’t come from unbridled rage any more than it comes from polite submission. Progress then and now comes from the collision of powerful forces within the hearts of those who strive for it. Anger and charity, love and hate, pride and shame, broken down and reassembled in an ingenious process that yields a fierce resolve.” Sidney Poitier: The Measure of a Man, 2000

So I find myself thinking about how I use and demonstrate my literacies and numeracies. How do I utilise them? For whose gain – or pain? I need to ask:

- Does my literacy help to break us down?
- Does it contribute to our reassembly?
- Does it yield a fierce resolve?

**Working from Strengths**

Thinking about these personal processes of change leads me to one of the more recent publications on my bookshelf. It’s not a massive volume – it’s a slender little spiral bound number – and if you’re interested it’s readily available as a downloadable PDF file, free from NCVER at http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1956.html

This is a story about another research project. We found a body of literature and practice in the community services and health sector which seemed to provide us with some useful leads on these issues of change and personal development. We found professionals in the community services and health sector who had been using forms of strength-based practice in therapeutic settings for some time. Their practice, we felt, might offer some useful insights for work in the adult basic education sector.

As we explored strength-based practice in this comparative study we came to appreciate the significance of **point of view or perspective**. In this graphic (left) we see the person on the left looking through her frame and asking ‘How does it seem to you’? Whilst her friend on the right, looking through her frame at the same ‘reality’ is getting quite a different picture. Either of these people could be a teacher – or a learner.

It is important to appreciate that our point of view, or perspective, is **shaped by our previous experience**. It might seem surprising – but we don’t all see the same thing – our point of view, our experience, and our culture, determine what we ‘see’.

Perceptions and point of view are important in strength based practice. You might consider how your **point of view** – as an adult literacy teacher, or researcher, or numeracy teacher, is different to that of others with whom you come into contact - and how is their point of view different to yours? Think about the advantages (and disadvantages) of these different points of view.

How does your perspective give you a different ‘picture’ or a different ‘angle’ on the situation, the problem, the issue – or the opportunity?

Strength-based practice suggests it is useful to pay attention to the language we use and in particular, the way we use language with our learners, or our clients, customers and colleagues.

Another useful metaphor we identified is that of the lens – whose lens are we using to view the situation?

- And are we aware of the lens we are using?
- Where did this lens come from? Who, or where did we get it from?
- Have we ever questioned the view of the world which this lens gives us?
- Would this situation look exactly the same if we viewed it through a different lens?
- What if we used the tutor’s lens? Or what if we used the students lens?
- What if we looked at this situation through the eyes of the employers who might wish to employ our graduates?

In this graphic (left) the teacher asks an adult literacy learner “why does the classroom worry you so much?”

She sees no threat in the teacher, or academic work, until she takes the glasses through which the student is viewing the situation (right).

Strength based practice involves the same kind of commitment. It involves a preparedness to view the world through others eyes and to withhold judgment and search for positives where they may not be immediately obvious.

Another metaphor we found interesting in strength based practice is the use of the scale. This is a conversational device rather than a physical instrument.

For example, we might ask: ‘How important is it for you to learn to read and write? On a ten-point scale, if one means it doesn’t matter that much and ten means it is one of the most important things in your life, where would you stand?’

Of course such a question could be framed around other objectives: How important is it for you to complete this apprenticeship, or be a hairdresser, or to succeed in this job? Offering the scale gives a learner a way to frame and quantify an answer to such a question.
When rating progress, the practitioner may ask the client what it would take to move up a point on the scale? This question will reveal the next step, although the practitioner must always be mindful of a person’s need to control their own destiny. At the end of the consultation, the person goes away with a plan of what they will do to create change in their circumstances. The agency for change is not handed over to the professional/practitioner. It is the responsibility of the individual, the client – the learner.

Finally, another useful language tool is the so called miracle question:

“For example, ‘If you woke up tomorrow morning and found the problem had gone away completely, how would your life be different?”

This technique assists the client to envisage another world and stand in a different space. The practitioner works with the client to probe the vision. What would look different? What would people say to you? What changes would they notice? How does it feel? What is it like in a problem-free space?” (Waterhouse & Virgona 2008, p.33).

This positive visioning enables the learner or client to see possibilities and begin to move towards them. It’s what John Bertrand was doing with his sailing crew.

It is also consistent with contemporary approaches to change management. For instance Mitchell and Young (2001) note that:

Traditionally change management focused on resistance to change and finding ways to overcome the resistance. Contemporary approaches to change aim at creating visions and desired futures, gaining political support for them and managing the transition … towards them. (Mitchell & Young 2001:10)
Conclusion

We’re almost out of time – and I need to finish up. But before I do so I want to stress the theme I’ve been exploring – about making a difference. I’m reminded here of George Bernard Shaw’s maxim:

“Reasonable people adapt themselves to the world.
Unreasonable people attempt to adapt the world to themselves.
All progress therefore depends upon unreasonable people.” (quote attributed to George Bernard Shaw)

I guess I’m forced to confess I am an unreasonable man.

We’ve only touched on some of the books on my shelves. We have focussed mostly on biographies and research reports – but we could have explored fiction from our bookshelves. Our stories of inspiration can come from all sorts of places – including fiction – which of course carries its own truth. But I don’t know where to stop.


What about Ian Gawler’s extraordinary story of surviving cancer (Allenby 2008) and the pioneering work he has done since on mind-body medicine, meditation and well-being.

Perhaps the mountaineer Lincoln Hall (2007) was just *Dead Lucky* to survive a night alone, in the ‘death zone’ high on Mount Everest but his account of the experience suggests otherwise; like Aron Ralston (2004) who was stuck *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, he called upon extraordinary personal qualities to survive in exceptional circumstances.
Can I stop short of mentioning *Uncle Tungsten* the memoir of the remarkable Oliver Sacks (2001); or *Fred Hollows’* (1991) autobiography; or David Suzuki’s (1988) *Metamorphosis*?

How can I not include Lance Armstrong (2002) who tells us, *It’s Not About the Bike*? And if I’m going to mention extraordinary athletes and the inspiration they can provide, what about this young man, the Kiwi Torch Bearer at the Sydney Olympics who has travelled from lung surgery and the high dependency unit in Waikato Hospital to become an Ironman anyway. He reminds us that life is about *Purpose* … His name is Aaron Fleming (2008) I haven’t read all of his story yet – but I will…

And just to address any doubt there might be about gender bias, there are also extraordinary women who inspire me with their stories.

What about Dr Catherine Hamlin’s *Hospital By the River* (Hamlin & Little 2003) which has saved and totally transformed thousands of Ethiopian women’s lives.

What about Kay Cottee’s (1989) *First Lady*; an account of her historic solo voyage around the world.

Or we could talk about Janine Shepherd’s (1997) story of recovery from injuries which smashed her body to the point she was not expected to live, let alone walk again, or learn to fly, or become a commercial flying instructor, or a mother. *Never Tell Me Never* is an apt title for her memoir.

Speaking of inspirational mothers, what about Helen Barnacle’s (2000) *Don’t Let Her See Me Cry*; a gut wrenching account of raising her daughter in prison – and her own journey from a hopeless young heroin addict to a successful psychologist, drug counsellor and prison reform campaigner.
Or should I mention Kirsty Sword Gusmao (2003) as *A Woman of Independence*?

Or the brilliant business woman, producer-artist and actor Goldie Hawn (2006), who reminds us *A Lotus Grows in the Mud*.

I’ve just recently found this book, *My Journey*, and I am so much looking forward to learning more about this woman Donna Awatere Huata and appreciating her love of Aotearoa.

And before I finish there is one more remarkable woman to mention. One who helped to shape the teacher I became when I first started an undergraduate degree over thirty years ago – a controversial woman, a person ahead of her time.

She was New Zealander who was quite simply, *Teacher*, Sylvia Ashton-Warner (xxxx).

The list could go on and on …

When I go back to my story, and to my bookshelf, I’m compelled to say that we are each unique. One of the profound contradictions and complexities of life is that we are all both ordinary (like my Mum) and yet, at the same time, we are, each and every one of us, *unique, special, different* and *extraordinary*.

In a sense we are all ‘abnormal’. As Margaret, from our *Contradicting the Stereotype* study – said, “What’s ‘Normal’ anyway? ‘Normal’ is a button on a washing machine.”

I collect inspirational stories and biographies because they remind me constantly of the power and the potential of human beings. Many of these people have learned to embrace their ‘abnormality’. They have come to see their individuality, their uniqueness, as a strength which they have a responsibility to develop and share with the world.

I loved the guy who said to Andrew Denton on Australian TV, “Be yourself. Everyone else is taken!”

These people show us what is possible – even when it seems impossible.

They show us courage, compassion, creativity and resilience.

They show us humour and hope. … They show us our humanity.

They show us how to make a difference.

Thank you for coming to our symposium. … Thank you for staying to the end!

Safe travel Home

—. Kia ora, Haere Rā
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