

## Wayfaring: An Apprenticeship in Narrative Enquiry

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### Introduction

When I was a child my father, who is a botanist, used to take me for walks in the countryside, pointing out the way that all the plants and fungi – especially the fungi – grew here and there. Sometimes he would get me to smell them, or to try distinctive tastes. His manner of teaching was to show me things, literally to point them out. If I would but notice the things to which he directed my attention, and recognise the sights, smells and tastes that he wanted me to experience because they were so dear to him, then I would discover for myself much of what he already knew. (Ingold, 2000, p. 20)

In his book, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, social anthropologist and philosopher Tim Ingold (2000) recounts how while growing up his father taught him botany during their countryside walks together. His conclusion (above) is worth repeating for it goes to the heart of apprenticeship learning, which is the subject of this essay: “I would discover for myself much of what he already knew”. Under his father’s tutelage, Ingold became increasingly attentive and responsive to living things around him.

The wonders of self-discovery eventually led Ingold to his pedagogical considerations on “enskilment”—the idea that “learning is inseparable from doing” and requires “a practical engagement in the world” (Ingold, 2000, p. 416). Here, Ingold emphasises that learning by way of enskilment is embedded ‘in place’ and requires guided attention so one can become familiar with a task or a

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skill. The role of the educator or seasoned practitioner, which in this essay we call ‘the apprenticer’, is that of “educere”, meaning to lead someone out into the world (Wood et al., 2021, p. 3). Their task, Ingold suggests, “is not to explicate knowledge for the benefit of those who are assumed, by default, to be ignorant but to provide inspiration, guidance and criticism in the exemplary pursuit of truth” by way of self-discovery (Ingold, 2000, p. 8). The less experienced practitioner is encouraged to attend to things directly, as they are, in the context in which they are watching, listening to, and feeling them (Ingold, 2000, p. 5). Over time, such efforts guide their pedagogical journey toward the “practice of wayfaring” (Ingold, 2011). To wayfare, Ingold says, is to become knowledgeable and to “trace a path...that others can follow” (Ingold, 2011, p. 162).

In this essay we retrace the path of our apprenticeship in narrative enquiry. We say ‘our’ apprenticeship because we both learned from each other as the process of enskilment became ‘our’ teacher. In this apprenticeship, I (Frances) became the apprentice, and I (David) became the apprenticer—a term invented and introduced to us by North American narrative practitioner Peggy Sax (personal communication, July, 2003). Our apprenticeship spanned a decade, from 2003 to 2013, and during the first five years we communicated almost daily via email. Looking back, our evolving pedagogy embodied Ingold’s process of enskilment and practice of wayfaring. Our explorations below illustrate how David was able to ‘show’ and ‘guide’ me (Frances) in the craft and art of narrative enquiry. How did David do that? He traced a path that I could follow.

### **Histories of learning**

I (Frances) first met David through his extensive publications (such as Epston, 1998, 1999; Epston & White, 1992; Freeman et al., 1997; White & Epston, 1990). I was captivated by the ways in which he and his colleagues put narrative ideas and practices to work on a range of problems. Intellectual rigor, ingenuity and exhilaration permeated their playful inventions. Artful enquiry led them ‘to go far fast’, enabling meaningful and uplifting outcomes. Their work not only spanned but also connected the interests of individuals, families, groups, organisations, and communities. I was especially drawn to their deep concern for ethics *and* politics in their relationships with the people they worked alongside. The more I read, the more I wanted to learn.

I am the kind of person who learns by listening and by doing, so perhaps I am well suited to apprenticeship learning. Before meeting David, I had previously worked in diverse roles across sectors. In some settings I worked with seasoned practitioners whom I now consider my apprentices. I believed they had something to teach me, even if I wasn't exactly sure of what I hoped to learn from them. A group of Sisters of Mercy I lived with for two years imbued my practice with their Mercy ways of thinking, being, and doing. During a two-year stint as a government adviser, an adept policy manager honed my craft as a writer. My relationships with Indigenous peoples—some of which now span decades and endure to this day—continue to educate me about what it means to be-in-right-relation when inhabiting Indigenous-Settler relationships. Along the way, I realised I was always-already grounded in place and deeply engaged in/with different social, cultural, economic, physical, and spiritual worlds.

My only child arrived when I was forty, prompting me to explore new opportunities. I was originally trained in social work and psychology (at Massey University) and in theology and ethics (at Harvard University). My shelves were full of books on writing, poetry, and memoir as well as texts from my academic studies. Now a new subject clamored for space: narrative therapy and practice. Yet, I was neither a counsellor nor a therapist, and I had no ambitions to become either. Instead, I wanted to pursue new ways to enact my vocation as a writer, while maintaining a necessary footing in the world of paid work with which I was familiar: organisational/community development. But I had no idea how to proceed.

In 2002, while on parental leave, I began attending a narrative interest group in Christchurch, where my family was then based. Hoping for inspiration to guide my way forward, in May 2003, I attended a four-day introductory workshop on narrative therapy practice, facilitated by David, at The Family Therapy Centre in Auckland. I felt excited boarding the plane. I was off on an adventure, but not one I could have ever predicted.

### **The provocation of narrative enquiry**

At the workshop, David warmly welcomed all the participants – mainly school counsellors, social workers, and therapists in private practice, as well as my friend and I who, as community development practitioners, were outliers. Some participants were well versed in narrative ideas, while others were just becoming

acquainted. David relished our questions and observations. Within the first hour, he also offered a provocation that caught my attention.

“I can counsel you to despair or to hope, which would you prefer?” After pausing, he added, “I prefer to think of myself as a practitioner of hope.”

In that moment I encountered a kind of intellectual and moral awakening. I interpreted David’s question to mean that enquiries matter; they influence the stories we tell of our lives, the sense we make of our lived experiences, the range of possible futures we might imagine for our lives, the identities we claim or reject, the works of justice to which we commit ourselves, and so on. His question not only drew my attention to the larger purpose of my lifework, but also to the power I could exercise, as a writer, by crafting narratives of hope.

David’s description of himself also startled me. Here was someone who had, with his colleague Michael White, co-originated a field of professional practice and academic study. Burgeoning interest in narrative therapy and community work had created opportunities for David that traversed international training and speaking engagements, research and writing, as well as a thriving therapeutic practice. I expected David to introduce himself by way of a professional identity such as an educator, researcher, writer, supervisor, therapist, and so on. That David identified himself by way of an ethical stance or orientation in, of, and to the world—as a practitioner of hope—challenged me to reconsider my own identity in light of my ethics and politics. I was hooked.

David offered another thought that sealed my interest.

“What I can do is ask good questions and it has taken me 25 years to learn how to do that,” he said, matter-of-factly.

Humility knows its own measure, I thought, scribbling his words in my notebook. Sitting there, with two university diplomas to my name, I could not imagine how I could learn to ask good questions within the restrictions of the programmes and pedagogies with which I was familiar.

## Sensing possibilities

As the first session ended, my wandering mind returned to those earlier apprenticeships I had taken up outside of the academy and a new thought took hold. At morning tea, I posed my own provocation:

“David, have you ever considered taking on an apprentice?”

“Yes!” he said, his face lighting up as he engaged in the conversation. “Lately, I have been thinking that apprenticeship is how the craft and art of narrative enquiry ought to be taught.”

We conversed for a while about the merits of apprenticeship as a practice-based pedagogy. David suggested the analogy of a master class in musical performance, which enables the passing on of artistic capabilities between skilled and aspiring practitioners.

Without realising it, we were already playing with ideas and language to support an apprenticeship in narrative enquiry. Even in its infancy, our conversation emphasized practice-based learning—in particular, learning by doing, in situ.

“I am an ethnographer,” David continued, further illuminating his interests.

From there, curiosity somehow led us into a discussion about ‘tacit knowledges’ (Polanyi, 1958, 1998), a term unknown to me but which I sensed was at the heart of David’s intellectual passions.

“Such knowledges are a kind of ‘know-how’ born of experience but are often hard to put into words,” David said. “Narrative enquiry brings those tacit knowledges to voice, so they can be considered in conversation.”

Yes, I thought, my unarticulated knowledges, whatever they are, lie in my very bones, which are holding me up and guiding me as I speak.

Then, David suddenly left the room. Just as quickly, he returned, with an armload of books for me to read on exactly the subjects that interested me, without my knowing what my interests were (Cruikshank, 1998; Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Nelson, 2001; Polanyi, 1958, 1998; Schon, 1983; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997). David proceeded to weave the loose threads of our conversation into a fabric of

meaning that not only made sense but also respected my relational, ethical, and political sensibilities.

Sensing possibilities, I pressed on:

“Could I become your apprentice?” I asked boldly, as if an assessment of the merits of my request was not required.

“We would need a project to work on together,” David said thoughtfully, as if he had already considered the matter or maybe he was making it up as he spoke.

“I’ve just been asked to undertake an organisational review,” I persisted, with all the confidence of someone who had found what they were looking for—their next teacher—and wasn’t about to let go of such an exciting prospect. “Perhaps we could work on that assignment together?”

“Write me a letter, telling me more about yourself and the project, and what you might hope to gain from an apprenticeship together,” he requested.

Over the following days, using videos to show the craft and art of narrative enquiry, I noticed that David often behaved more like a participant than a workshop leader. He would sit on the edge of his chair intently watching a video of himself interviewing someone else. I suspect these were videos he had seen many times before. But it was as if he was watching them for the first time and seeking to learn from the exchange he was witnessing, as much as I and other workshop attendees hoped we would. In other words, David gave every impression that he was learning with us. I had never had an experience quite like this before or seen ‘learning in collaboration with one another’ demonstrated in that way.

This guy is passionate about what he does, I thought. As much as he knows, he wants to know more and doesn’t assume he knows it all.

Another striking insight stayed with me. During the workshop, David encouraged us to view the people who consulted us as our ‘co-researchers’ and regard them as ‘the authorities on their experiences’ (Epston, 1999).

“Our collaborative task is to generate a kind of ‘knowledge agency’ that enables those who consult us to exercise the authority to express themselves in terms of

their knowing or know-how,” David explained. “They assume the right to be the knower and their knowing to be authoritative.”

His explanation offered an intellectual provocation against (by then) my seven years of formal academic training. That training had consistently privileged expert knowledges in the form of theoretical/philosophical, professional, technical, and scientific learning.

When I returned to Christchurch, I wrote the letter that David had requested and sent it to him via email. I had already learned that a good apprentice does what they’re told and makes it a priority. Doing so shows respect for and sustains the interest of their apprenticer. In the letter, I recounted my histories of apprenticeship learning and expressed my desire to learn how to ask good questions. I was interested in the “mystery and manners” of narrative enquiry conversations, a phrase I borrowed from the North American short story writer Flannery O’Connor (1984). I wanted to deepen my understanding of what it meant to be an ethical practitioner, critically aware of power relations affecting the groups and communities with whom I worked. I also wanted to learn how to ‘write my own practice’, as a source of learning for myself and others.

### **An apprenticer’s response**

I (David) was intrigued by Frances’ letter and excited by the idea of our working together. During the workshop, she showed me that she not only relished narrative ideas but also had the capacity to play with them and see where they would take her in her work. She showed me she had patience with herself, unlike many others who approach learning a practice, as if they were acquiring a commodity. Also, she badgered me but in a way that caught my interest. In saying that, she must have also known there is such a thing as too much badgering. I must have been willing to risk that this apprentice would lead me to be a better apprenticer. And perhaps, too, she was unafraid of such a relationship, which she spelled out to me. Perhaps in her previous apprenticeships, she had grown comfortable with such arrangements.

I had previously performed the roles of supervisor, mentor, and consultant, although already our discussions had reached beyond these descriptions. Exploring the relevance and versatility of narrative ideas and practices across different disciplines and professional realms had long interested me and reflected

my own eclectic reading habits. Here was an opportunity to consider whether the intimacies and intricacies of a practice that had originated in the therapeutic realms of mental health, psychiatry, psychology and social work, could be 'made over' and articulated within the fields of organisational and community development. Some essays had already headed in that direction (such as Barry, 1997; Barry & Elmes, 1997; Sax, 2000).

Yet, while I felt enthusiasm for the notion of apprenticeship, I was somewhat uncomfortable. I had studied its venerable tradition and had previously trialed some version of it with an aspiring narrative therapist Jo(sefina) Viljoen who was based in Pretoria, South Africa. As Frances and I now considered the terms of our engagement over email, I addressed my concerns to her.

"Frances, you certainly don't seem to be uncomfortable with the idea of apprenticeship, whereas I am, and I am wondering why. I do know that the practice that evolved between Jo and myself was as close as I can think of to that tradition. For example, both parties are so close to the practice at hand in contrast to the comparable distance in conventions surrounding clinical supervision/consultation. I also know, along the way, my curiosity got the better of me as I saw something happening in front of my eyes (on my computer screen) that I found somewhat hard to believe. I was able to 'see' my craft being enacted as Jo, herself, became a party to it. At times, for example, she would read my enquiries aloud to the person she was working with and record their responses so she could type them up and email them to me. In a manner of speaking, she was handling my craft, time and time again, much like a senior surgeon might take over at a certain point in a surgical procedure because it was 'risky', 'difficult', or 'just unknown' to the apprentice surgeon."

My discomfort remained clouded, until a subsequent email exchange illuminated its source. I connected Frances with Jo via email, hoping she might learn from Jo's experience of working with me. I subsequently introduced them both to my North American narrative colleague Peggy Sax. In a shared email exchange, the four of us agreed that we could not countenance using the term 'master' given its historical association with slavery. Peggy suggested 'apprenticer', a term she had invented, which we immediately embraced.



## How the apprenticeship worked

We (Frances and David) agreed to go forward and see where our apprenticeship might lead us. We began a series of email exchanges that became our main means of engagement with one another and remains so until this very day. We also enjoyed occasional phone calls and periodic face-to-face meetings at David's office, a local café or, in later years, at his home. We had no grand plan for how the apprenticeship would work. Instead, we were led by our interests and availability, and by opportunities that came our way.

## *A site of pedagogical engagement*

Our first foray was the organisational review I had mentioned to David when proposing an apprenticeship. In 2003, we were invited to undertake a review of St John of God Services (SJOG) across Australasia, focusing on its mission of hospitality. The commissioning body was the Australasian Province of the Hospitaller Order of St John of God Brothers (the Order). This Catholic religious order sponsored health, community, and disability services in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. The Order welcomed David's role as a supervisor and as a co-researcher/outside conversationalist. I would manage the contract, conduct interview-based and documentary research, as well as draft the final report.

Inspired by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot's (2000) research on 'messengers of respect', we conducted a transdisciplinary study of people working in different SJOG roles and settings across Australasia whom we described as 'exemplars of hospitality'. During onsite visits, David encouraged me to seek out 'insider knowledges' as a way to identify practitioners who had earned the reputation of being 'exemplars' or 'messengers' of SJOG Hospitality.

"David, what exactly do you mean by the term 'insider knowledges'?", I asked via email, having never encountered that notion before. His reply offered a succinct and captivating explanation that would anchor our future work together.

"Insider knowledges are local, particular and at times unique as they often arise from imagination and inspiration, not the usual technologies of scientific knowledge-making," he explained. "Because they are, in the first instance, the intellectual property or otherwise of the person(s) concerned, outsiders cannot rightly claim either invention or ownership of such knowledges. 'Insider knowledges' are modest and make no claims beyond the person(s) concerned.

They do not seek any monopolies of ‘knowing’ but sponsor many kinds and ways of knowing. ‘Insider knowledges’ do not provide grand schemes as they are far too humble for that ... and are carried best by and through stories” (Hancock & Epston, 2008, p. 486).

David’s method worked. Depending on insider knowledges led me to quickly identify and invite 11 exemplars of hospitality to join our study. Excited by the prospect of reflecting on the heart of their practice, they all agreed to participate. I conducted an in-depth face-to-face interview with each one and witnessed them at work. I later returned my extensive interview notes, reflections, and interpretations to them in the form of a letter that I crafted as a ‘story-in-text’ (Hancock & Epston, 2008). I used these ‘stories-in-text’ to seed email conversations with our exemplars over the next four to six months and, during this time, we had up to 50 email exchanges with some exemplars.

I (David) relished the opportunity to consider how to translate narrative enquiries into the medium of email conversation, which was central to the research design. I had access to the ‘stories-in-text’ that Frances had composed. I studied these texts and interpolated my own enquiries into Frances’ existing questions, explaining my thinking as I went. This pedagogical process sparked a fresh round of conversational exchanges with the exemplars.

I (David) soon realised in working with Frances that I had been tutoring myself while working extensively over email in my clinical practice and with supervision of and consultation to colleagues. The convenience and adaptability of email conversation had allowed me to embrace long-distance requests. In speaking with Frances about the intimacies and intricacies of email conversation, and in particular the craft and art of good questioning, I was bringing them into my own conscious awareness for the first time. A key insight I uncovered for myself and conveyed to Frances concerned the practice of schmoozing. I advised her to schmooze a little in and around the questions she wished to ask exemplars via email, so her enquiries wouldn’t come across as taxing or testing. I explained to Frances that schmoozing is a Yiddish term that translates into something like a warm, amiable conversation and conveys an ‘interested’ tone.

I (Frances) could often hear David’s voice echoing in the questions I posed to SJOG exemplars. I learned to read and reproduce David’s tone by engaging with him intensively through email conversation. When I got in the groove of narrative

enquiry conversations with SJOG exemplars, questions kept appearing, seemingly from nowhere. It felt like we had entered what David described as “the unknown land that is unrepresented by language and thought”.

“That is a great question; I never thought about it like that before,” SJOG exemplars often replied, describing the conversations in similar ways whatever their role or location. “That [conversation] was really useful—a different way of thinking.” “Your questions keep me on my toes!” “You’re making me think.”

Their comments told me I was on the right track; the conversations mattered to both of us and were sources of valuable learning.

Occasionally, during our email conversations with SJOG exemplars, I (Frances) paused to review the growing avalanche of text.

“I feel so moved by what I am reading,” I wrote to David one day, “and at the same time fascinated by it. I must keep reading!”

“That is a very telling sign,” he replied. “Questions must implicate the fascination and intrigue of the questioner. You become so interested that the question conveys your intrigue. You burden yourself with the intrigue of questions, showing a willingness and a readiness to assist, by providing yet another question pointing in a different direction, even if that leads to a dead end from which you are forced to turn back—as if everything goes somewhere. I share the burden of travelling in the unknown, but I invest that burden with anticipatory excitement.”

The next day, when replying to a SJOG exemplar, David signed-off his enquiries with this thought: “I can’t wait to hear your answer. Thanks, in anticipation.”

I (David) realized in talking to Frances via email that I loved to have my hands on the computer keyboard. One day I attempted to explain to her where this thought was leading me.

“Why? Because I sense movement as soon as my fingers touch the keys. The movement is not simply in my fingers. Something will come up. The idea of writing a book chapter fills me with dread. How do I do it? I had a history of pleasurable connection between the keyboard instrument and my creativity that had me ‘making a work of it’, making it up as I was going along, or in other words translating tacit knowledge into an externalized text—the ‘oeuvre of the work’.

When textualized, the conversation and its questions become a work-in-progress that can be worked on and developed by means of close review and considered reflection. In other words, the know-how of enquiry becomes accessible for review. People do not often look at their questions or even realise that their questions may not be questions. The intimacies and intricacies of questions are so rarely considered by comparison to the weight given to one's conclusions."

Our SJOG research project spanned 18 months and produced over 1,000 pages of research materials. We undertook this study during a period in which individual members of the Order faced allegations of sexual abuse, which were before the Courts and cast a looming shadow over its services. Project participants relished the opportunity to engage however, and many later said they had experienced "some of the richest conversations" of their lives. Three years after concluding the assignment, with the Order's permission, we recorded our journey with SJOG and traced our apprenticeship in narrative enquiry in *The Sage Handbook of New Approaches in Management and Organisation* (Hancock & Epston, 2008).

### ***Other opportunities – a two-way street***

During the SJOG assignment, David arranged for me to undertake an ethnographic study of a master's level course on narrative therapy led by Wally McKenzie, co-director of the Hamilton Therapy Centre. The course was jointly offered by the Department of Education (Counselling) at the University of Waikato (where Wally was an adjunct faculty member) and the then School of Community Studies, UNITEC Institute of Technology in Auckland (where David was a visiting professor).

With the approval of the University Ethics Committee, I acted as a 'pseudo-student' seeking to develop a participatory view of Wally's exemplary narrative therapy pedagogy, with David acting as an external supervisor. Witnessing Wally at work in the classroom helped me to see and appreciate the pedagogy or process of enskilment in my developing apprenticeship with David. Both men modelled values of hospitality, respect, curiosity, generosity, perseverance, and integrity. Through storytelling and role-modelling, they put their practice 'on show' for their students to examine, and expected us/students to do the same, as we explored together an ambrosia of possibilities offered in a narrative approach.

Over the following years, we (Frances and David) continued our apprenticeship by applying narrative ideas, practices, and ethics in particular sites of engagement, as well as co-authoring several practice-based publications. We collaborated on community and organisational development assignments drawn from my (Frances') consulting practice, including a seminar for senior government officials (Hancock et al., 2006), a community visioning project (Hancock et al., 2007), case stories of community-led approaches and social innovations (such as SECPHO et al., 2009), a strategic planning process for a community organisation (Hancock & Epston, 2013), and staff training.

Engaging as associates, we conducted email conversations with co-researchers in diverse roles and settings. In other assignments, I (Frances) submitted examples of my work (such as interview transcripts, workshop outlines, project briefs, draft reports, plans, and case stories) for David to work on. David continued to interpolate enquiries and comments in such texts for me to consider.

### **Learning along the way**

After a busy day, juggling consultancy assignments with parenting duties, I (Frances) would email David some aspect of my work in the early hours of the morning and go to bed relieved I had done my homework, only to find a reply from him the next day with more questions or thoughts for me to consider. What kept me at the computer, working into the early hours, night after night, was more than discipline. David's passion for narrative practice called forth my own excitement and life purpose. Perhaps the real challenge was how to keep up with David; his pace was incredible!

### ***The ingenuity of narrative enquire***

Over time, I (David) sought to convey to Frances, by whatever means I could, that narrative enquiry conversations are unusual; that is their intention, for they seek to take you places you haven't been before and lead you to considerations you haven't yet considered. If they have an itinerary, it would be wanderlust! The enquirer must be willing to shepherd the conversation, seeing to it that it does not go astray or get lost, at the same time as leading it forward to fresh pastureland. These conversations require the enquirer to judiciously lead the conversation or alternatively to be led by the conversation.

When we met to review work-in-progress, I found myself discouraging Frances from referring to existing terminology to name the craft and art I was seeking to impart, although we both accepted that some referral was inevitable. I counselled her to take her cue from her work.

“Exciting horizons lie in the remnants of conversation that our conversationalists leave behind,” I suggested, “as well as in our own ongoing reflections on and in our practice.”

Over time, I (Frances) began to realise that in posing narrative enquiries to organisational and community practitioners, such questions have the effect of ‘showing up’ or ‘showing them’ their know-how.

“The enquiry happens in the context of the conversation,” I wrote to David. “It is not free-floating or plucked from ‘a question bank’ found in a handbook on organisational studies or whatever. Rather, each enquiry emanates from within or inside a particular conversation. Its very particularity and pertinence make it compelling. By contrast, a ‘tools and template’ approach can only take you as far as the list of prototype questions it offers.”

David’s reply went to the heart of narrative enquiry and our evolving apprenticeship.

“Travelling without an itinerary requires the interviewer to draw closer to the interviewee,” he observed. “Questions become more intimate, possibly even scary, but not so scary that they cannot be comfortably answered. In the dark you draw closer to find your way together. The interviewer’s questions are taking someone where they have never been before. There is considerable responsibility to ensure that no one gets lost or comes up against the hazard of bewilderment. If your interviewee loses their way, they may lose heart, feel humiliation or a loss of face, or lose touch with their newfound authority, which could cause them to question: ‘What right do I have to think I know anything? How did I get that idea?’”

“Narrative enquiry is best understood as an instrument of good conversation,” David continued. “It becomes the means to the expression of know-how. Questions invite the expression of another’s knowledge: knowledge which is in the making. The conversation ‘makes up’ or generates knowledge. This doesn’t mean it wasn’t already tacit. Tacit is ineffable; there are no words for it, yet. The

point of the enquiry is to bring the interviewee's knowledge into words: to articulate it and see where it goes from there or what it can do."

### ***An unhurried pace and engaging manners***

I (Frances) was learning through narrative enquiry conversations to better understand and appreciate the ways of knowing, being, and doing of the Other as a critical guide to action.

For that to happen, however, I had to attend to the setting or circumstance of knowledge-making by ensuring that there was sufficient space and opportunity to engage in a meaningful conversation. Here, again, David's guidance was crucial. Sitting together in a local café, he emphasized an unhurried pace and engaging manners.

"The pace must be relatively unhurried to allow adequate time for the conversation to continually open itself up and renew itself," he explained.

After pausing, as if to learn more from his own experience of the thing he was now reflecting on, and in that very moment engaged, he added another thought.

"The conversation continually excites and incites or, in other words, is stirred up again and again by the vivacity, congeniality, and curiosity we, as interviewers, bring to it," he said, finding his words as he went.

"Your choice of words here suggests a kind of passion or verve," I replied. "So, is passion a prerequisite for narrative conversations?"

"I believe so. Without an ethic of passion, the work becomes an intellectual exercise or 'a job'. You risk missing the heart of someone's story, the invisible but implicit upon which crucial meaning-making often turns. With an ethic of passion, a co-research conversation will insinuate itself into their life and yours. It will allow for innovative and bold risk-taking but not in a thoughtless or an unethical way. Here, I am thinking of passion not as a primordial essence, but rather as something that can be intentionally cultivated in a meaningful co-research conversation and through narrative pedagogies."

### ***What an apprentice can teach***

Studying examples of email conversations led me (Frances) to probe David for insights. Over email or face-to-face, I would ask him to please explain the reasons for this and that, and what is the point of ... and why did you ask that ... and what comes to mind when you read these questions ... and how would you describe this vocabulary ... and can I improve this text in any way ... and so on.

“I am a demanding apprentice,” I wrote in an email one day. And, feeling concerned that I might exhaust his patience, I promptly endeavored to account for my behaviour. “I am hungry to know more about the disciplines of a narrative enquiry conversation that have people go beyond what they know.”

“I relish the enquiries of my apprentice,” David replied cheerfully, “for you demand that I refer to my own unarticulated tacit knowledges, the very thing a narrative enquiry conversation seeks to articulate. What are these disciplines indeed!”

### ***A political orientation to the work***

We often discussed the political orientation that ‘inspirits’ narrative practice. David introduced me to the scholarly writings of the French philosopher Michel Foucault, whose work I found liberating. I quickly embraced Foucault’s idea that power is exercised through social relations, rather than being possessed by individuals or groups (Foucault, 1980, 1997). As a generative force, Foucault argued, exercising and negotiating power can enable people to craft lives of their own making as well as resist coercive repressive action. I became keenly interested in how narrative ideas, practices, and ethics can help to inform and shift power relations, so that those who are least likely to be seen and heard in society can exercise voice (and other forms of agency) to influence decision-making affecting their lives, concerns, aspirations, and futures.

Our apprenticeship also demonstrated positive and productive possibilities for pedagogical relationships in which an apprentice curtails the exercise of their power by showing themselves to be their own student and their apprentice’s colleague.



### ***A vocation in service of others***

Our apprenticeship encouraged me (Frances) to put my vocation as a writer to work in service of communities who suffer the effects of injustice but are often ignored and struggle to be heard in society. Exploring possibilities for narrative work with diverse groups and communities created opportunities for collaborative text-making projects. These projects centre local concerns, particular lived experiences, community/organisational knowledges, preferred practices, daring aspirations and social innovations.

I learned/taught myself how to craft and co-author case stories that make visible the elegance of the everyday lives and lived wisdom of the people/groups I work alongside. These narratives not only cultivate the shared commitments and aspirations of organisational and community members, but also help to inform their funding applications, social enterprise, and consultations with key partners. Joy is another outcome; the joy of being seen and appreciated, the joy of uncovering what you already know, the joy of having local knowledges articulated, understood, and valued, and the joy of communities owning their own quietly ingenious and wonderfully effective social innovations. Such assignments nourish my passion for creating narratives of hope that enact David's ethics of respect, generosity, and accuracy (Hancock et al., 2007; Hancock, 2019).

### ***Becoming wayfarers together***

Our apprenticeship also challenged me (Frances) to (re)imagine and live my way into transformative possibilities of being-in-relation with the communities with whom I work. Through our apprenticeship, we forged a process of enskilment that was at the same time a process of "be(com)ing" (Dam, 2023, p. 228) or, as Ingold says, "coming-into-being" (Ingold, 2009, p. 29). The seemingly inexpressible *and* material experiences of apprenticeship took me (Frances) to the threshold of my own limits, and beyond (Todd, 2014). I be(came), came-into-being as, a wayfaring narrative practitioner.

Over time, I (David) noticed that I was reading the text of Frances' email conversations, rather than interpolating alternative enquiries into the text or making other amendments. I had become so engrossed in reading the text that I forgot myself; I forgot that I was an apprenticer. We had become wayfarers working together.

Our apprenticeship lived on, in text, allowing us to return to it, to again reflect on our pedagogical experiences, “in action” (Schon, 1983) and afterwards, including now more than two decades later. It also cultivated a life-long friendship between us that includes our partners. It paved the way for us to enjoy political, social, and literary banter and discuss ongoing assignments. It has also allowed me to call upon David for moral support and wise counsel, knowing ‘he is that person who knows me and has my back’.

### Last words

I (Frances) have searched everywhere for the letter I sent to David in 2003, outlining my desire to become his apprentice and what I hoped to learn from him. I am convinced I still have it, buried in a box somewhere—a pedagogical artifact waiting for a time such as this—but I cannot find it. Instead, I came across diary notes, email exchanges and other compositions that contain insights from and on our lively pedagogical exchange, some of which we relied upon when crafting this essay.

These records show how David met me where I was and, together, we forged our way from there. Starting out, I expected to sit on and watch from the sidelines, but I never did. David expected me to learn by doing in situ, as he himself does. He was convinced that narrative insights could invigorate worlds beyond the therapeutic realms he daily inhabits. Importantly, however, he didn’t offer, and frankly refused to countenance, ready-made answers. I hoped applying narrative ideas and practices to the fields in which I worked would become a source of fascination for us both. It must have—here we are co-authoring an essay together more than 20 years later.

I (David) continue to act as an apprenticer and have worked with many apprentices over the past twenty years. With my colleagues Kay Ingamells and Tom Stone Carlson, I have co-developed a year-long apprenticeship programme in narrative practice that allows me to continue the kind of enskilment process and wayfaring practice I enjoyed with Frances. This programme offers a practice-based pedagogy, which we call “training through transcripts” and cultivates an online learning community of skilled narrative practitioners from all over the world. It enables them to discover and name narrative practices of their own as their apprenticeship develops (Epston et al., n.d.). The pace is less demanding than the one Frances experienced, but the work no less enthralling.

Over the past twenty years, I (Frances) have worked alongside many inspiring practitioners and gone on long learning journeys with some of them. Although I never refer to myself as an apprentice, I constantly return to my own “histories of wayfaring” (Ingold, 2009, p. 43) for guidance.

How would David approach a conversation or situation like this? I ask myself, when navigating challenging moments in my work. I am reminded of David’s humble, hopeful, hospitable, and generous way of being, which exudes respect for and genuine interest in the Other. Again, I am invigorated by his passion and his perseverance. And, immediately, I am relieved of the burden of being an expert on someone else’s life (as if that were ever possible or desirable). I sidestep the pressure of providing ‘all the answers’. I take a deep breath to ground myself. As I exhale, a helpful narrative enquiry bearing tacit knowledge finds its way from my bones to the tip of my tongue. In its annunciation, our apprenticeship lives on. David is with me.

I once asked David how he sustains his therapeutic practice along with frequent international travel for training and speaking engagements, voracious reading, diverse research projects and constant writing.

“The thrill of it all,” he said. “The joy of learning that someone has ‘seen’ or ‘knows’ something that they had not ‘seen’ or ‘known’ previously, that brings them some measure of joy.”

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