



Fostering Dialogue about Social Justice, Food Systems, and Sustainable Agriculture: An Engaged Pedagogy Perspective

KIM NIEWOLNY, PH.D

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL, LEADERSHIP, & COMMUNITY EDUCATION

VIRGINIA TECH

“I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits.”

Martin Luther King, Jr., remarks from acceptance speech of the Nobel Peace Prize, 1964



Karen Washington, Farmer and Activist

“It’s not a food movement we need to talk about in this country, it’s that we find ourselves in the 21st Century a country and society still divided along racial and economic lines. We will never move forward until we address the problem of racism and economic injustice head on. It’s about taking on an active conversation to deal with this problem. So far the voices of fear and hate are drowning out the voices of reason, truth, and love. Once we have that open and honest conversation we then need to follow it up with action...”

Part 1: Civic Agriculture & Food Systems (CAFS) Minor

Part 2: Food Security & Resilient Communities Graduate Coursework

Part 3: Narratives & Story Circles



Part 1



Civic Agriculture and Food Systems

VIRGINIA TECH



ALS 2204 Introduction to Civic Agriculture
 ALS 3404 Ecological Agriculture
 ALS 4204 Concepts in Community Food Systems
 ALS 4214 CAPstone: Civic Agriculture & Food Systems



Values-based Cornerstones



Food Security/sovereignty



Healthy people/
communities



Civic engagement
Democratic Participation



Ecological
Stewardship



Collaborative Teaching
Experiential learning



Strong local
economies

Community Partners/Service Learning



Part 2

Graduate Course Work

- *Food Security & Resilient Communities: Food Systems Theory & Practice*
- *Study Abroad to Cuba: Food Sovereignty, Culture, & Resilience*



Framed as Community Food Work (Slocum, 2007)

Holds an inclusive meaning that embraces several interconnected domains and processes that constitute alternative food and farming system efforts...

- ◆ *farm sustainability* – related to connecting small-scale farmers to markets
- ◆ *nutrition education* – with emphases on the prevention of diet-related illnesses
- ◆ *environmental sustainability* – related to the development and support of more ecologically sound agricultural production
- ◆ *social justice* – which consists of a bifurcated approach—producer/worker rights and hunger/food insecurity

Part 3

Stories of Community Food Work





Stories of Community Food Work in Appalachia

Opening Space for Storytelling and Learning

- ◆ Create/share narratives that illustrate the lived experiences of activists, educators, farmers, and practitioners who are involved in Appalachian organizations working toward food and farming system change in the region.
- ◆ Initiative launched in VA and grew to WV and NC.
- ◆ Initially funded through the USDA NIFA Appalachian Foodshed Project
- ◆ Facilitated through the *Food Security and Resilient Communities* graduate course (2013, 2015, 2017)



Narrative Inquiry

- ◆ Narratives as both a *process* of reflection and reflexivity through storytelling and the *products* of engaging with the everyday knowledges of community food work.
- ◆ Participants and students involved in the design of questions/prompts
- ◆ 90-120 minute semi-structured interview process with prompts with focus on a “practice story”
- ◆ Transcribed, edited, and read/”analyzed”
- ◆ Vetted for public sharing and reading
- ◆ Digitally archived

Niewolny, D’Adamo-Damery, N. D’Adamo-Damery, P. & Landis, 2014; Virginia Tech IRB #13-264; Connelly & Clandinin, 2005; Peters & Hittleman, 2003; Peters et al., 2004; Richmond, 2002;

Story Circles



- ◆ Roadside Theater’s Methodology for performative social change
- ◆ A Story Circle is a small group of people sitting in a circle telling stories or remembrances, led by a Story Circle facilitator. Each Story Circle is different according to its purpose
- ◆ Supports a basic principle of community change work: “Those who directly experience a problem must make up the generative base for devising and enacting the solution.”
- ◆ Helps individuals discover their own truth of the issue, and then to test and develop that truth in dialogue with other community members.

Available for free download and reuse under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported license from: <http://roadside.org/samples/story-circles>

Why Narratives/Stories?

When facing a complex problem, “seeing” the system “better” means reading a multiplicity of realities and generating new ways to engage them.

- ◆ Encourages the weaving together of our personal stories and social issues
- ◆ Helps to humanize the “wicked problems” of our food and farming system
- ◆ May transform unjust knowledge and realities through our everyday interactions to take on new and more critical forms of systems change

“I am looking forward to not being so mad about decisions that are made for me instead of with me. I’m excited about that. I really do want to live in a world where we are more valued; especially these huge populations of people who are suffering from these systems that we’ve created. You can’t put blame on a person who is operating in a system that’s holding them down, whether that is ageism or poverty or racism. I’m looking forward to those things being a little less heavy on everything that we’re doing. I mean we already do value people; we just do it wrong. The wrong people are getting paid the wrong amount of money for the wrong things. And not everyone. There are a lot of people out there making good dollars, and they should continue making it, **but where do we place value?**”

Thank you

Kim Niewolny, Virginia Tech; niewolny@vt.edu



www.blogs.lt.vt.edu/niewolny/



www.roadside.org/samples/story-circles



References

- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D.J. (2005). Narrative inquiry. In J. Green, G. Camilli, & P. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in educational research* (pp. 477-489). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group
- Hamm, M.W. (2009). Principles for Framing a Healthy Food System. *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition* 4(3-4): 241-250.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress : Education as the practice of freedom*. London: Routledge.
- Hamm, M. W., & Bellows, A. C. (2003). Community food security and nutrition educators. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 35(1), 37-43.
- Lather, P. *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern*. London: Routledge.
- Law, J. (2008). On sociology and STS. *The Sociological Review*, 56(4), 623-649.
- Mol, A. (2002) *The body multiple: Onotoly in medical practice*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Newman, M. (2006). *Teaching defiance: Stories and strategies for activist educators*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Peters, S.J., Grégoire, H. and Hittleman, M.J. (2004). Practicing a pedagogy of hope: Practitioner profiles as tools for grounding and guiding collective reflection in adult, community, and youth development education. In R. Vince and M. Reynolds, (Eds.), *Organizing Reflection* (pp. 194-219). Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishers.
- Peters, S.J. & Hittleman, M.J, (Eds.) (2003). *We Grow People: Profiles of Extension Educators*, Cornell University Cooperative Extension, New York City. CU: Ithaca, NY.
- Richmond, H. (2002). Learners' lives: A narrative analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, 7(3). Retrieved from: <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR7-3/richmond.html>
- Slocum, R. (2007). Whiteness, space and alternative food practice. *Geoforum*, 38,520-533.