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Education

PhD, Sustainable Education, Prescott College

Key Interests

Sustainable Food Systems | Urban Agriculture | School Gardens | Campus Farms | Local Food Policy | Eating Behaviors

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SELECT PUBLICATIONS

- › LaCharite, K. (2016). Re-visioning agriculture in higher education: the role of campus agriculture initiatives in sustainability education. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 33(3), 521-535.
- › LaCharite, K. (2016). Growing a culture of sustainability: urban agriculture experiences and undergraduate student perceptions and behaviors. In M. Barnett *et al.* (Eds.), *Urban Agriculture and STEM Learning*, New York, NY: Springer.

Research Focus

Human behavior, including agricultural practices and eating habits has long been recognized as the root of environmental degradation. Consumption of refined sugars, refined fats, and meat are increasing with a global rise of incomes and urbanization. Projections estimate an 80% increase in greenhouse gas emissions from food production by 2050. Additionally, these dietary trends are driving the rate of diabetes, chronic heart disease and other chronic non-communicable diseases.

Studies have demonstrated how school gardens can have a positive effect on knowledge, preference, and consumption of fruits and vegetables. College farms and gardens produce similar results. Students who participate report an increase of buying and eating fresh fruits and vegetables. The experience changes what they want to eat and what “tastes good”. But the missing gap in the literature in both school gardens and college farms is understanding precisely why the changes in eating behaviors occurred. My research shows the formation of emotional attachments plays a significant part of those changes at the elementary school and college levels.

Current Projects

- Collaboration with Carley Maltese-Fisher in Early Childhood Education and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education in Washington, D.C. to study direct and indirect outcomes, including place attachment, science learning, and eating behaviors of school gardens.
- Virginia Food Systems Leadership Institute is a multidisciplinary project of Virginia’s public universities with the aim to foster rising leaders in the area of sustainable food systems and the emerging local food economy in the Commonwealth. Practical models for transforming food service procurement can provide a useful tool for overcoming barriers that currently prevent dining services providers from spending a higher percentage of their budget on local and sustainably produced food.