



Lehigh Valley Research Consortium Newsletter

Fall 2009

Message from the Director

Dear Friends,

Over the past few months LVRC faculty and students have engaged in intensive community-based research and service projects. In October we released our report, *The Status of Latino/Hispanic Public School Students in the Lehigh Valley*. Our partner, the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation's Latino Economic Council – Education Subcommittee, commissioned the report in order to examine outcomes, opportunities and obstacles for area Latino public school students. A summary of the findings is found inside. A full copy of the report is also available on our website, <http://www.lehighvalleyresearch.org>.

In early December we will release a study of the disabled population of the Lehigh Valley. This study will help the newly formed Partnership for a Disability Friendly Community develop programs and services to better meet the needs of our disabled community members.

In addition to large scale research projects, with the support of the LVRC, faculty and students from our local colleges and universities have partnered with local non-profits to support programs and services, while incorporating these experiences into classroom instruction. In this edition we focus on Drs. Christopher Reubeck and Rich Niessenbaum's efforts to engage students in learning about the local food system, working closely with the Greater Lehigh Valley Buy Fresh Buy Local chapter.

Finally, look for our *State of the Lehigh Valley 2009* release in December. This report will highlight changes in the economy, educational outcomes and public safety since 2004. It will also examine Valley residents' opinions about the quality of life in our region.

Happy Holidays,

Michele Moser Deegan, Ph.D.
Director, Lehigh Valley Research Consortium
Associate Professor, Political Science
Muhlenberg College

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Faculty Spotlight - Dr. Christopher Borick

Dr. Christopher Borick, PhD is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Muhlenberg College and serves on the LVRC executive board. Dr. Borick is also the director of the Muhlenberg Institute of Public Opinion, which often partners with the LVRC on research projects.

Recently, MIPO, LVRC, Lehigh University, and the United Way collaborated on a Lehigh Valley Hospital Study that surveyed Allentown city residents about health-related issues. The results of this study, which measured community health issues (i.e. the effect of the recession on community health), will be available in December 2009. The Institute of Public Opinion is also currently conducting a phone survey of PA residents regarding public health issues and the ongoing healthcare debate. Respondents are being asked about what reforms they feel are necessary for the health care system in the United States, and also to react to recent concerns about the H1N1 (swine flu) virus. Every spring, the LVRC and the MIPO partner on a Lehigh Valley quality of life study that examines the biggest concerns of residents of Lehigh and Northampton counties, as well as current relevant policy issues. Because it features the same questions each year, the study illustrates patterns of public perception in the Lehigh Valley from 2003-2009.



Dr. Borick has published and presented over twenty articles on public policy and public opinion, and received the Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching in 2006. He has conducted over 150 large-scale public opinion surveys during the past decade. The results of these surveys have appeared in numerous newspapers including the Chicago Tribune, Wall St Journal, Los Angeles Times and Washington Post. He has also provided analysis for the BBC, National Public Radio, CBS News and NBC Nightly News and had his survey results aired on, CNN, FOX News and C-Span. During his career he has conducted surveys for a variety of government agencies and organizations including the Center for Disease Control, The United Way, Wisconsin Public Radio, The Wisconsin Department of Commerce, the Oneida Indian Nation, The U.S. Department of Labor and Habitat for Humanity.

He is currently teaching a class in public health policy in which his students are involved in conducting the interviews for the MIPO public health survey. He is also teaching an urban politics and planning seminar during the fall semester. Students enrolled in this course will complete semester-long research papers that focus on local urban issues including education reform and economic redevelopment of inner cities. He received his Ph.D. from SUNY Binghamton and previously has held teaching positions at The State University of New York at Cortland, St. Norbert College. He also held positions with the Internal Revenue Service, and the Monroe County Planning Commission before enrolling in his doctoral studies. Dr. Borick can be reached at cborick@muhlenberg.edu.

Building Collaboration and Community Through Service-learning Courses

Local Food and Local Taste: A Study of Supply and Demand

Last spring semester faculty from area colleges incorporated service learning research into their courses in order to study the Lehigh Valley's demand for and supply of local food. The project was administered through three different courses on three campuses. Students from Muhlenberg College served as researchers as part of an independent biology study project, Lehigh University students completed their capstone marketing economics project, and students at Lafayette College completed group projects as part of their marketing research class.

The groups studied each step of the supply chain as well as our local customers. The Muhlenberg students studied farmers, the Lehigh group studied restaurants, and the Lafayette groups studied farmers, grocers, restaurants, and consumers.

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Mission Statement

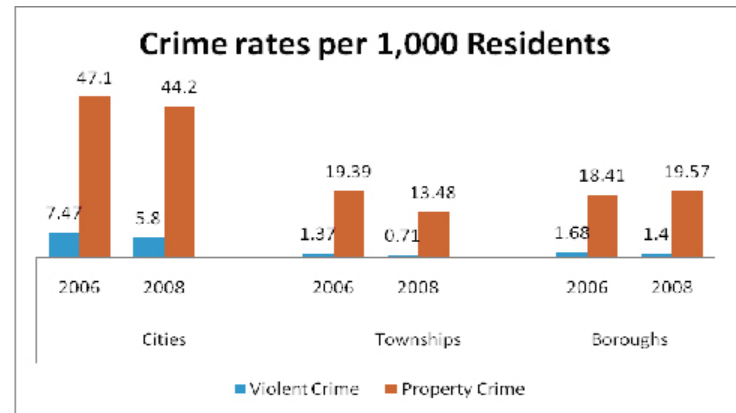
The Lehigh Valley Research Consortium (LVRC) combines the expertise of researchers from institutions of higher education and community partners in the Lehigh Valley to examine various issues (eg., political, economic, social, health and environmental) in a regional context.

Through its efforts the LVRC functions as a community based information resource for Lehigh Valley governments, not-for-profits, businesses, and citizens.

Community Based Information System

The LVRC's community based information system is continuing to expand and includes data from 2004 through 2008. These data will be highlighted in our upcoming *State of the Lehigh Valley 2009, Community Trends at a Glance* report. Here we highlight some of the trends in public safety.

In 2008, the Lehigh Valley's cities, townships, and boroughs experienced a decrease in violent crime rates. Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton had a 22.36% reduction in violent crime rate, from 7.46 per 1,000 residents in 2006 to 5.8 per 1,000 in 2008. Violent crime rates in our region's townships that report to the Uniform Crime Statistics decreased by about 15% as did our region's boroughs, which dropped by about 12% from 2006 to 2008. Property crimes also decreased in our region's three cities, by about 6% but there was a slight increase in the boroughs and townships. Townships had a 15% increase in property crime rates from 19.39 per 1,000 in 2006 to 22.34 in 2008. Boroughs also saw an increase of 12.17% from 18.41 to 20.65. These trends may be the results our struggling regional economy, including increases in unemployment rates, along with an increase in available properties in our townships and boroughs in which to commit crimes.



Source: Pennsylvania Uniform Crime Reporting System
Not all township data are reported to the UCRS.

This Fall we are expanding our data collection to include years 2003 and 2009 in each of eight categories: Economy & Employment, Education & Youth Services, Governmental Affairs, Environment, Land Use & Infrastructure, Political & Civic Participation, Population, Public Health & Welfare, and Public Safety & Criminal Justice. In addition, other indicators of community "well being" such as Arts and Culture are being explored for inclusion in our database.

For more information about these data contact Tami Howe at tamihowe@lehighvalleyresearch.org.

Building Collaboration and Community continued

Common among all the findings was interest in the distribution of foods from farms to grocers and restaurants. The findings uncovered a range of business arrangements to supply local markets, but there appears to be room for entrepreneurial innovation—in consumer awareness and in developing ties between farmers and downstream businesses. In terms of current marketing methods, websites and online directories were as frequent as brochures, signs, and newspaper ads.

Other findings from the project include that consumers and restaurants alike value taste and freshness in their decision to buy local, and the small businesses (restaurants and inns) value supporting the smaller farmers that often sell this fresher, tastier food. Convenience also figures highly in consumers' decision about buying locally-grown food. In contrast, there was not evidence that price discounts are correlated with consumers' desire for taste, price, or convenience. Different demographics may weight this factors differently, with the younger consumers focused on convenience and the older on taste and quality.

The Greater Lehigh Valley chapter of Buy Fresh Buy Local funded the report, available in its entirety on our website: <http://www.lehighvalleyresearch.org>.

Advisory Board Organizations

- Air Products
- Children's Coalition of the LV
- City of Allentown
- City of Bethlehem
- Community Action Committee of the LV
- Crayola
- David Vaida Law Office
- East Stroudsburg University
- Intermediate Unit 20
- Intermediate Unit 21
- Lehigh County
- LV Arts Council
- LV Chamber of Commerce
- LV Convention & Visitors Bureau
- LV Economic Development Corp.
- LV Planning Commission
- LV Research Consortium
- LV Workforce Investment Board
- Nazareth Area COG
- Network of Young Professionals
- Northampton County
- PPL Corporation
- St. Luke's Hospital
- Wildlands Conservancy
- WDIY - 88.1FM
- WLVT - PBS 39

Current Research

Wall Street West

The Lehigh Valley Research Consortium has teamed up with The Institute for Public Policy and Economic Development in an effort to evaluate the impact of one of the WIRED (Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development) initiatives from the U.S. Department of Labor called the Wall Street West Project. This project was established after the 9-11 terrorist attacks as a way to develop a back-up solution for companies in financial services, information technology and related sectors through advancements in economic and workforce development within a 10-county region in Pennsylvania. The 10 counties that are covered by this grant include: Berks, Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Wayne, and Schuylkill. Over the past three years, the Wall Street West initiative has awarded funds to over 40 recipients in education, business and other organizations in an attempt to achieve the twin goals of economic and workforce development through targeted talent development, technology and other transformational strategies.



This program is funded in part by a Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) grant from the U.S. Department of Labor

Several of these grants have instituted collaborative partnerships between industry, non-profit and educational entities. The multidisciplinary and inter-institutional team coordinated by LVRC is evaluating the direct, indirect and collective impact of these Wall Street West grants in terms of economic, workforce development and educational outcomes using interviews, document analysis, archival records, fiscal data, focus groups, and surveys of grantees, participants, career professionals and employers. The research team is led by Bhagyavati (Computer Science, Columbus State University) and Bob Brill (Psychology, Moravian College), and includes Sue McGorry (Business, DeSales University), David Gilfoil (MBA Director, DeSales University), Yuping Zhang (Sociology, Lehigh University), with Tami Howe and Michele Deegan (LVRC) serving as Project Manager and Coordinator respectively. The team will also evaluate the sustainable status and impact of Wall Street West funding. The project is expected to continue through early 2010. For questions contact Dr. Robert Brill at mertb01@moravian.edu or bags@gmail.com

Lehigh Valley Disability Study

The Lehigh Valley Disability Study, commissioned by the Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network in the Summer of 2008, is gearing up for its big finale: the unveiling of the LVRC Disability Research Team's final report, this coming December 3, 2009 at 2pm at the Gates Center at Northampton Community College. Led by Dr. Lanethea Mathews-Gardner (Political Science, Muhlenberg College) this project surveyed approximately 600 individuals with disabilities and caregivers of people with disabilities living in Lehigh and Northampton counties. In addition, the research team held a series of focus groups with individuals drawn from the survey sample. Finally, a second survey was administered to more than 70 community organizations and agencies serving the disability community.



The LVRC and Good Shepherd are hopeful that the knowledge gleaned from this project will enable community organizations and leaders to improve access and inclusivity for people with disabilities in the Lehigh Valley. In addition to the public release of the report on December 3, data will be made publicly available on the LVRC's website in early 2010. In addition to Mathews-Gardner, the research team includes: Dr. Stefanie Sinno (Psychology, Muhlenberg College), Dr. Sue McGorry (Business, DeSales University), and Dr. Mary Ellen Miller (Nursing, DeSales University). Contact Dr. Lanethea Mathews-Gardner@muhlenberg.edu for more information.

Contact Information

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For more information on the LVRC:
Website: www.lehighvalleyresearch.org
Phone: 484-664-3848

The Status of Latino/Hispanic Public School Students in the Lehigh Valley

In October, the LVRC released a report examining the status of the Latino/Hispanic school-aged population of the Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania in the 17 public school districts in Lehigh and Northampton counties. The report was commissioned by members of the Latino Economic Council of the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation. The report includes an analysis of education data from the PA Department of Education, along with interviews of administrators in the Allentown, Bethlehem Area and Easton Area school districts. Key findings of the report are:

- The Latino/Hispanic student population is growing beyond the urban core to all districts, particularly those outside the Route 22 and Interstate 78 corridor. By the 2007-08 school year 22% of students enrolled in the Lehigh Valley (LV) were classified as Latino/Hispanic compared to the statewide rate of 7%.

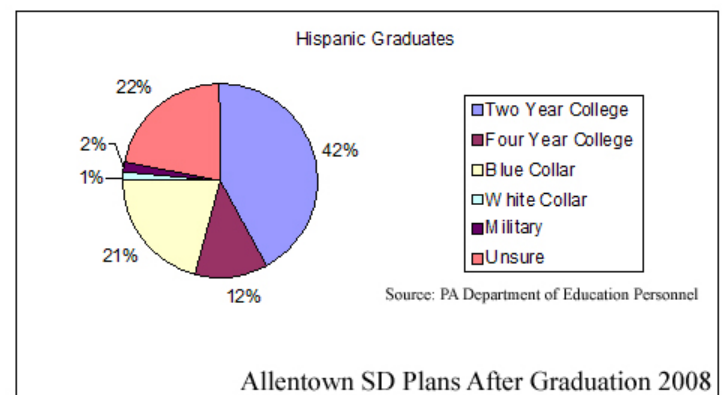
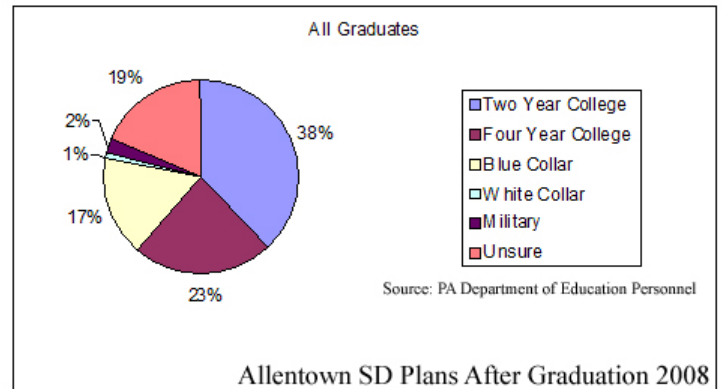
- Latino/Hispanic students are making progress towards meeting educational standards, particularly in math, however, they continue to lag behind other students particularly in the area of reading. While Latino/Hispanic student PSSA results improved, the increase in the statewide standards caused this subgroup to appear to worsen.

- Latino/Hispanic graduation rates increased slightly from 2007 to 2008, while the average graduation rate for all students decreased. Even with the increase, graduation rates for Latino/Hispanic students still lagged behind the average graduation rates for all students.

- While the number of Latino/Hispanic students taking the SAT test is increasing, their results lag behind White non-Hispanic and Asian students, particularly on the verbal portion of the exam.

- As this example of the Allentown SD suggests, many Latino/Hispanic high school graduates plan to enroll in

higher education upon graduation; however, they are more likely to enroll in a two year college than a four year. Latino/Hispanic students are also more likely to say they are unsure about their future plans upon graduation than other racial/ethnic groups.

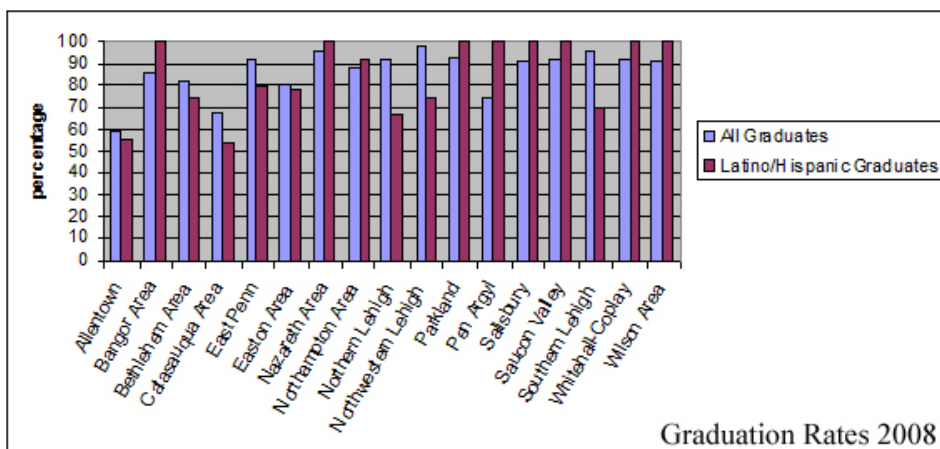


- According to our interviews with school district administrators, at the instructional level, there is a continued need to improve the educational environment for Latino/Hispanic students, particularly those that are not enrolled in ELL curriculum. This includes greater instruction about Latino culture and history.

- There is a need for more minority teachers and staff development for existing teachers in the areas of differentiated instruction and cultural awareness.

- There is a need to continue to engage Latino/Hispanic families in schools and provide assistance at the school level for these families.

For a complete copy of the report visit our website: www.lehighvalleyresearch.org or contact Dr. Michele Moser Deegan at deegan@muhlenberg.edu.



The LVRC operates within the administration of the Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges.

For more information about LVAIC visit www.lvaic.org.

LVRC Colleges & Universities

Cedar Crest College	www.cedarcrest.edu
DeSales University	www.desales.edu
Lafayette College	www.lafayette.edu
Lehigh University	www.lehigh.edu
Moravian College	www.moravian.edu
Muhlenberg College	www.muhlenberg.edu
Lehigh Carbon Community College	www.lccc.edu
Northampton Community College	www.northampton.edu

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